

# *Kalki's Short Stories* *A Study*

Dr. MEENAKSHI MURUGARATHANAM,  
M. A., Ph. D.,

Reader in Tamil

INSTITUTE OF CORRESPONDENCE COURSE AND  
CONTINUING EDUCATION

MADURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY  
MADURAI



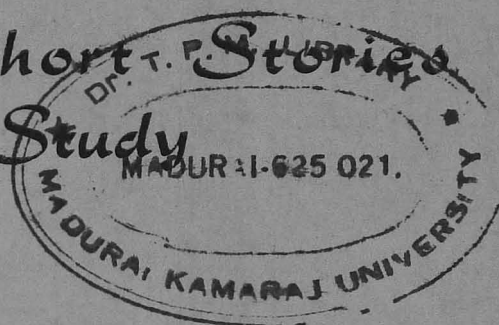
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## Preface

*The thesis submitted for the award of Ph.D., (Madurai University) is now published under the U.G.C. Scheme of publication of theses. The gist of the thesis has been published in Tamil about an year ago and now, the thesis is published with a few modifications in order to make the book readable.*

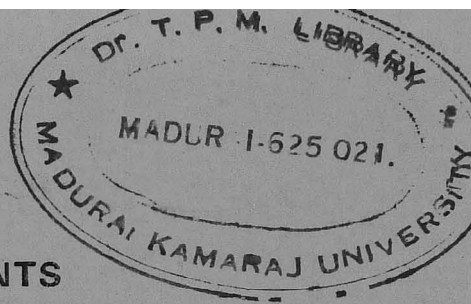
*I thank the University for having selected my thesis for publication under the aforesaid scheme, and the U.G.C. for rendering the essential financial assistance. I am greatly indebted to Dr. R. Shanmugam, Reader in Dravidian Languages, Madurai-Kamaraj University and Prof. Sokthivelan of Thiyagarajar College for the valuable guidance and encouragement they rendered throughout.*

*My thanks are also due to Thiru, P.V. Ramachandran, Reader in English, I.C.C. & C.E., Madurai-Kamaraj University, for having given me valuable suggestions towards the improvement of the publication.*

*Messrs. Karunanithy Printers deserve my appreciation for the co-operation they rendered throughout.*

*I regret that due to certain unavoidable drawbacks the widespread method of transliteration could not be followed in this book. Instead the corresponding Tamil forms for the Tamil words used are given in the foot-notes whenever the words occur for the first time in this book.*

*Meenakshi Murugarathanam*  
MADURAI-KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY



## CONTENTS

Page No.

### 0. Introduction

Choice of subject for research	1
Limitation of subject	2
Selection of the author	2
The material for analysis	3

### 1. The Background Influences

Kalki's purpose of creation	5
Period of living	6
Personal life	9
Journalist	9
Fiction writer	10
Active Politician and social Reformer	11
A critic	
Kalki's theory of the art of Short Fiction	13
Kalki's Personality	17
Kalki's role in the development of Tamil Short Fiction	18

2 Theme	19
The role of theme in fiction	19
Kalki's attitude and approach to fiction	20
Kalki's themes	21
Ethical value of Kalki's themes	23

Optimism	23
Universality	24
Aesthetic value of Kalki's expression of themes	25
Explicit statement of themes in Kalki's stories	26
Implicitness	27
Digressions	29
Crossing the line-mark	29
Arriving at the wrong coast	30
Educative value of Kalki's themes	31
<b>3. Plot</b>	<b>32</b>
What is Plot ?	32
Basis of plot : conflict	34
Conflict in Kalki's stories	34
Nature of conflicts	35
Moments of conflicts	35
Construction of plot in Kalki's stories	37
Thematic stories	38
Character stories	43
Complication stories	47
Recurrent elements in Kalki's plots	51
Rumours	52
Dreams	52
Illusions	55
Journey through the past	55



Life of artists	55
Resemblances	56
Defective plotting in Kalki's stories	57
Lack of idea	57
Unwanted additions	58
Change of track	58
Double Focus	58
Unnecessary lengthening of plot	60
Plausibility in kalki's plotting	60
Contradiction	61
Adaptations	62

<b>4. Characters</b>	64
The importance of characters in short fiction	64
Kalki's characters	64
The general pattern	65
Historical characters	68
Abstract characters	69
Fantastic characters	70
Character Types : Active characters	71
Characterisation	73
Naming	74
Physical description	76
Modes of characterisation	77
Author's explanation	77
Through speech and dialogue	78
Through suggestions	78

Through action and reaction	78
Through interior monologue	80
Subtlety in Kalki's characterisation	80
Appreciation of Kalki's characterisation	81
Natural life-like characters	82
Knowledge of human nature	84
Variety in the choice of characters	88
Interesting characters	89
Unforgettable minor characters	90
Interdependence of plot and characterisation	91
Flaws in Kalki's characterisation	92
Language of characters	98

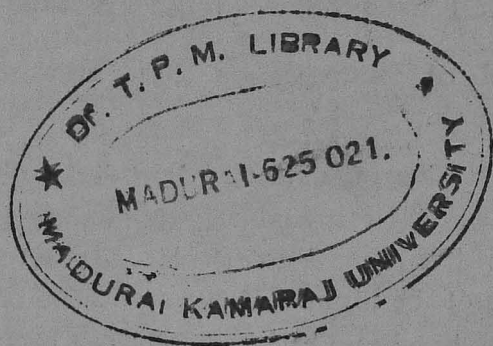
<b>5. Language and style</b>	<b>101</b>
The language of fiction	101
Kalki's view on fictional style	102
Kalki's style : A general view	104
Objective presentation	104
Participant presentation	104
Spectator presentation	105
Analysis of style : Factors for consideration	106
General and specific diction	107
Concrete and abstract diction	108
Formal and informal diction	109
Kalki's humour	119
Humour in situation	120

Humour in characterisation	124
Humour in Language	129
Various types of humour in Kalki's stories	133
Wit	133
Satire	134
Irony	135
Fantasy in Kalki's humour	139
Uses of language and style in short fiction	142

<b>6. Techniques</b>	<b>143</b>
Titling	143
Beginning	147
Telling Medium	150
Non-participant point of view	151
Participant point of view	152
Setting and atmosphere	154
Locale of Kalki's settings	155
Speech and Dialogue	159
Advancement of narrative	159
Introduction of characters	160
Revelation of characters	160
Interior monologue	161
Natural opening of Conversation	163
Dialogue appropriate to characters	163
Dialogue appropriate to situation	166
Indiscrepancies	166
Suspense and surprise	167

Character surprises	168
Complication surprises	168
Foreshadowing and Flashback	170
Immediacy and spontaneity	172
Transitions	
Unity of Effect	175
Lack of idea	
Not giving dominance to the story idea	176
Uncertainty of the author	178
Author's intrusion	179
Conversing with readers	179
Conversing with characters	181
<b>Conclusion</b>	182
Select Bibliography	189
Index	194





## *Introduction*

0.1. Choice of subject for research : New arrivals, in any form and through any means, are quite natural and often becoming to Literature. They may be adaptations, translations, introductions from alien lands; a change, a growth or merely a deviation from the traditional lines; or, merely the rebirth of an once-glorious-forgotten-in-between form. No matter what forms they assume, they are signs of growth. Growth is a sign of progress, and progress is essential for any literature to be recognised as a living one.

The history of Tamil literature has ample evidences, for the growth of its literary splendour, from the hoary past to the present, in the form of newly introduced forms of literature.

Many significant changes have occurred in Tamil literature through the passage of Time. An outstandingly remarkable change was the beginning of the increasing use of prose-medium. This change came about after the introduction of printing machines. It resulted in the creation of several new forms of literature — novels, short stories, biographies, etc.

And, the field of short-fiction has been selected as the topic of research.

**0.2. Limitation of subject :** In order to be exact in approach and arrive at the essential aspects of the most prolific Tamil Short Fiction, it has been felt desirable to fix definite limits for the exploration of the topic. Hence, a problem arose in determining the period to be chosen for research. The mental ship carrying the cargo of ideas, tossed about by under-currents of fear and over-powering doubt-winds as to the availability of the materials and the capability of analysing them completely, finally found itself safely anchored in the nineteen forties and fifties. The rapidly growing grandchild of Modern Tamil Literature—the Short Story—seems to have reached its age of sophistication only in the nineteen seventees. Yet, the age of crawling and lispng appears more attractive in that it offers more of swift changes to be noticed particularly; provides the reader with a variety of interesting traits to be proud of; and above all, possesses the still-lingering freshness of germination found in a plant of a few inches height. Hence, the short stories of the pre-independence days have been chosen for study.

**0.3. Selection of the author :** In that period when Tamil Short Story was in its early stage, we come across many short story writers who are remembered by us. In fact, most of them are still alive. Many are still busy writing; a few have turned critics. Ra. Krishnamurthi popularly known as 'Kalki' had a unique place among them.

Posterity remembers him only as a novelist. But his contemporaries have appreciated his stories too. No one can deny that he was a popular, humorous short story writer. But the world remembers him only as a novelist. Why? The purpose of the thesis is to find the answer to that big 'Why'.

If even his contemporaries have ignored his creation, we could easily have set him aside as a failure in that art.

But, it has not been the case. That shows that he is not to be altogether ignored in that field; nor could he be recognised as a successful master of the art, as his contemporary *Pudumaippithan* (புதுமைப்பித்தன்) was.

Then, where did he fail? And, how did he succeed in spite of his drawbacks? In other words, what are the weak points in his practice of the art of short fiction? And, what are his merits that buoyed him in spite of them? To find an answer, a critical analysis of Kalki's stories is attempted here.

Since the contents and techniques cannot be easily separated, the structural elements—Theme, Plot, Characters and Language—are discussed along with the techniques handled by the author in presenting each of these structural elements. For instance, after discussing the various themes found in Kalki's short stories, the way in which they are expressed in the writing is also discussed. The techniques used by Kalki in the presentation of his plots are discussed under respective sub-headings. While dealing with his characters, the mode of characterisation is also studied. Thus, a complete analytical study of Kalki's stories is made, keeping in mind as the foremost consideration, the policy that a work of art — especially in the field of short fiction — is one of synthesis and hence, any evaluation or judgement made of it would be worthwhile only if the analysis tried to discuss it as a whole — as one single unit.

**0.4. The material for analysis :** The conclusions given in this thesis are based on an intensive analysis of the stories that occur in the following short story collections that were published with the aim of introducing all the best and popular of Kalki's stories to the world.

1. Veenai Bavani (வீணை பவானி)
2. Madathevan Sunai (மாடத்தேவன் சுனை)

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3. Orrai Roja                        | (ஒற்றை ரோஜா)                     |
| 4. Sarathaiyin Thanthiram            | (சாரதையின் தந்திரம்)             |
| 5. Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu               | (கனையாழியின் கனவு)               |
| 6. Zameendar Makan                   | (ஜமீந்தார் மகன்)                 |
| 7. Bankar Vinayaka Rao               | (பாங்கர் விநாயகராவ்)             |
| 8. Karirulil Oru Minnal              | (காரிருளில் ஒரு மின்னல்)         |
| 9. Mayil Vili Man                    | (மயில் விழி மான்)                |
| 10. Mayilai-k-kalai                  | (மயிலைக்காளை)                    |
| 11. Thiruvallunthur<br>Sivakkolunthu | (திருவழுந்தூர்<br>சிவக்கொழுந்து) |

This thesis tries to justify the inclusion of Kalki's name in the list of successful short story writers in Tamil in the nineteen forties and briefly enumerates the reasons for his success.



## Chapter 1

# *The Background Influences*

### 1.1. Kalki's purpose of creation

There were and still are, a set of writers, who write fiction, not with the view to establishing any new, high ideals and thereby reshape the attitudes of society and man, but just to entertain. They succeed wonderfully in entertaining and, nobody could claim superiority over them or place any blame upon them for their notion of entertaining through art.

Art may be instructive, but that is not its only virtue. It can be entertaining as well. One cannot deny the value of optimism in Art. Man lives on hope. It is the hope of tomorrow that enables him to live 'today', forgetting or ignoring or setting aside, the blows of 'yesterday.' Learning about the hideous facts of life are no doubt of value to him-if he takes them with proper understanding; if he is able to accept and swallow the bitter truth and continue to live undisturbed under any circumstance. But, such an attitude which is typically that of a karma yogi, is not an easy one to be achieved by ordinary human minds. It needs intense practice and serious contemplation. Hence, presentation

of the gloomy side of things may perhaps result in discouraging one's ambition. But, optimism (though condemned as romanticism and idealism, and welcomed only by the critics of the 19th century who advocated what was termed 'The Genteel Criticism',) has great value, since it provides man with hopes for the future, essential for living.

Choosing the brighter side of Nature and the human mind, strengthens the will to live and to 'live good'. In this way Kalki's writings are definitely to be praised. He teaches people to ignore the misery and the pathos in life and stick hopefully to the humorous side of it. He shows how to laugh at human weaknesses. He implies that man is a mixture of good and bad. Thus, his writings are in a way, not only entertaining but also enlightening.

Hence, it is necessary to understand his aim—that of entertaining the mass—in order to appreciate his writings.

## 1. 2. Period of living

Another factor that obviously influences an author's writings, is the period in which he lives. Kalki lived in the era of India's struggle for freedom from foreign domination. The leaders of his nation were actively engaged in breaking the chains of slavery. Several movements were afoot all over India. Papers and periodicals campaigned vigorously against the British. Even the new genres - short stories, novels etc., portrayed the lamentable situation then existing in India. Chivalry and patriotism became the major concerns of writers' and characters were shown to be ready to sacrifice even their lives for the noble cause of liberation of their country from the British. The plots were spun around the much-adored conflicts of the freedom movement. The themes were related to the enthusiastic outbursts of patriotism of the nation's youth. The setting was more often than not, a city or a village, busy in following *Gandhi's* foot-path. Hence Kalki's stories abound in such plots, themes and characters.

Other problems that were disturbing the then-existing society set-up were: Women's liberation, prohibition, and corruption.

Even towards the middle of the 20th century, when Kalki appears, the Indian women were in dire need of liberation from the partly self-imposed and partly enforced slavery. They were not given an equal status in society. Higher education was, to most of them, a thing undreamt of. Eyebrows were raised and contempt was shown, if an educated woman moved freely with men. Still, exceptions were there, and they were extraordinary. We meet in the history of India's independence, women who played an important role in the freedom-struggle; women who possessed higher education and were engaged in social work; women who were great thinkers, poets, politicians and social-reformers. Nevertheless, these were a mere handful when compared to the great mass that was suffering from illiteracy, inequality, poverty and self-imposed subordination.

The two great evils that needed immediate eradication from their lives were, early marriage and the rigours of widowhood. Before the passing of The Sarada Act, it was the custom among Hindus to decide the whole future of a child even before she was four years old. The most pitiable aspect of those early marriages was the possibility of an equally early widowhood which was unredeemable. Also, there was every possibility of an eligible young girl forced by financial or other unavoidable circumstances, to marry an elderly widower. In short, the women belonged to the suppressed class in society in many aspects and it was rather an exception than a rule, if a woman proved herself to be capable or dominant.

We find this state of affairs reflected in the characters of Kalki's stories. Kalki's women characters come from both urban and suburban areas. We meet innocent, uneducated females as well as educated, sophisticated and cultured ladies.

He shows the reaction of the public to the upliftment of women's status in society, through the comments of the elders at home.

For instance, in *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu* the heroine *Sakunthala* is praised by the youth, and adversely criticized by the elders of the village, for her attempt to remodel the village.

Some of the conflicts in his stories are the obvious results of the new opportunities placed before men and women in a rapidly reforming society. Examples are, *Chandramathi*<sup>1</sup> *Kamalavin Kalyanam*<sup>2</sup> *Subathirayin Sakotharan*<sup>3</sup> *Vaira Mothiram*<sup>4</sup> etc. Thus we find that the problems of the society have influenced either directly or indirectly, his character delineation, plots and setting.

Another burning problem of his day was the enforcement of prohibition. The great leader and the father of the nation, Gandhi, was calling upon the people of India to liberate themselves from the clutches of alcoholism - the greatest evil that leads to ruin. His staunch followers were actively engaged in propagating the advantages of prohibition. The disciples of great leaders such as *Rajaji*, *Patel* and *Panth* (Kalki was one among them) stood before toddy and arrack shops and prevented the customers from entering them. They were utterly unmindful of the physical sufferings that they had to bear in implementing this anti-alcoholic programme. When such was the case, it is no wonder that one full collection of Kalki's short stories - *Bankar Vinayaga Rao* - was devoted to the theme of advocating prohibition by emphasizing its evils.

1. சந்திரமதி

2. கமலாவின் கல்யாணம்

3. சுபத்திரையின் சகோதரன்

4. வைரமோதிரம்



### 1.3. Personal life

The third factor that has to be taken into consideration while discussing the background influences that are responsible for the sort of output of any author is his personal life.

1.3.1. **Journalist**: Kalki was, above all, a journalist, and a successful one in his career. As any journalist who wishes to make his life a success would do, Kalki understood the proper material for mass-appeal, and succeeded in his attempt to reach readers of varied interests.

As *P.S.Ramaiya* points out in his article about the Manikkodi period, "S. S. Vasan, the publisher of the well-known Tamil journal, *Ananda Vikatan*,<sup>1</sup> soon understood that the sales of his magazine would rapidly progress if only he published in it, interesting articles and entertaining stories. Naturally, he invited Kalki, Thumilan and other authors to be included in the editorial board. From that day, *Ananda Vikatan* has been following the policy of publishing only those writings that would appeal to the mass in general. Even now it is the same. Kalki, the chief editor, obviously worked with the view that magazine literature should have a standard within the reach of the mass. His style, helped by the democratic concept of the publisher tremendously helped towards the growth of the magazine."<sup>2</sup>

Kalki has worked in *Navasakthi*<sup>3</sup>, *Ananda Vikatan*, and *Kalki*.<sup>4</sup> He has contributed to other magazines also. But, unlike other journalists who specialize in a particular field and devote their life-time to it, Kalki had a wide circle of interests ably supported by an equally wide range of talents.

As it could be learnt from the publisher's note to the collection, *Kumariyum Kundramum*,<sup>5</sup> "Kalki is the unparalleled artist of Tamilnad. His writings were read with equal

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. ஆனந்த விகடன்                             | 2. 'Deepam', June 70, p. 72 |
| 3. நவசக்தி                                  | 4. கல்கி                    |
| 5. குமரியும் குன்றமும், முதற்பதிப்பு, 1956. |                             |

interest by everyone - rich and poor: children and adults, men and women. He wrote about everything in Tamil—Politics, Art, Literature, Music, Novel, Short Story, Economics. In all these fields, he was capable of expressing his views with authority sometimes based on research and deep study, in a simple style sprinkled with humour.”<sup>1</sup>

The high regard in which Kalki was held is justified when one goes through his publications. About 40 books have been published in his name and they range from short stories and novels to articles of literary criticism and politics.

*P. S. Ramaiah*, in his review of the writers of Manikkodi period, points out Kalki's sense of humour and his descriptive skill. He comments: “People realised their latent strength in the field of politics. Kalki wrote in a way that reminded them of it. At the same time, he wrote critical reviews about the cultural programmes in a manner that popularized music and dance. He made it clear that enjoyment of those arts are not reserved for the handful who have learnt them who have acquired deep knowledge about them: but, that they should be learnt and presented in a way to reach the people of all levels”.<sup>2</sup>

**1.3.2. Fiction writer :** The fact that Kalki is also one of the great fiction-writers in Tamilnad is expressed by *C.S. Chellappa's* words: “whatever credit Manikkodi gets in the field of short story, has been equally achieved by *Kalaimakal*,<sup>3</sup> in the field of novel. And, *Ananda Vikatan*, also shares the credit through the achievements of Kalki.”<sup>4</sup>

Kalki started publishing in *Ananda Vikatan*, new ideas in new forms. He presented with skill the new genre that was touched by *V.V.S. Iyer*—namely the short story.

Thus we find that he had a wide variety of talents and interests, and was able to communicate them to his

1. பதிப்புரை

2. *Deepam*, June 70, p. 72.

3. கலைமகள்

4. *Deepam*, Dec, '72, p. 34.

readers through various media - short stories, novels, biographies, auto-biography, essays, articles, criticisms, and drama in a simple style full of humour and irony. Perhaps this wide range of interests accounts for his not concentrating upon any particular field.

1.3.3. Active politician and social reformer : In his life, Kalki was actively engaged in politics and social reforms. He was directly involved in the various movements of India's freedom-struggle, and had the privilege of being in prison with great leaders and politicians as accounted in his very short auto-biography *Mundru Matha-kkadunkaval* <sup>1</sup> (three-months rigorous imprisonment). This interest in politics—Kalki's active participation in India's revolt for freedom—is clearly revealed in most of his plots and occasionally in the characters and settings of his stories : We can quote such instances:-

a) The comment he gives in the end of the story, '*Idintha Kottai*' :<sup>2</sup>

"The devil ! Could he not have confessed the truth at-least with me? If only he had done so, I would have saved him by telling, 'My foolish boy—Love, affection and all such nonsense would last merely for three days. If you would sacrifice your life for the noble cause of saving your nation, atleast then, you would have really achieved something.'"

b) The introducing of foreigners as minor characters in the stories *Madathevan Sunai Ejamana Visuvasam*,<sup>3</sup> *Lanjam Vangathavan*,<sup>4</sup> *Rangadurkkam Raja*<sup>5</sup> and *Vaira Mothiram* ;

1. மூன்று மாதக் கடுங்காவல்

2. இடிந்த கோட்டை

3. எஜமான் விசுவாசம்

4. லஞ்சம் வாங்காதவன்

5. ரங்கதுர்க்கம் ராஜா

## c) His choice of conflict in the following stories -

*Tookku Thandanai*<sup>1</sup> where the main character is portrayed as being mistaken for an energetic youth of extremist principles engaged in anti-British activities and unjustly sentenced to death by a 'loyal servant' of the British Empire-

*Rangoon Mappilli*<sup>2</sup> where the telling medium is a Rangoon-returned Indian who narrates the pathetic story of a patriot.

*Thippiditha Kudikaikal*,<sup>3</sup> where the characters are nominees for the Panchayat Board Election ;

d) The setting in the stories: *Zamindar Makan* and *Rangoon Mappillai* where the plots occur in bombed areas and the characters are evacuees returning to their motherland amidst great confusion and troubles.

e) The characters in *Governor Vijayam*<sup>4</sup>—two big individuals in a village, craving for the attention and recognition of British officials and the conferring of the 'Bagdur Titles upon them for being very loyal to the British.

*Srikanthan Punarjenmam*,<sup>5</sup> where the heroine is disappointed with the hero who is unable to withstand the hardships of fighting for independence ;

'*Vaira Mothiram*' where the minor characters include people from the high society circle, affected and showy, trying to imitate the customs of the British ;

All these are undeniable proofs of how his personal life and attitudes moulded his stories.

1. தூக்குத் தண்டனை

2. ரங்கூன் மாப்பிள்ளை

3. தீப்பிடித்த குடிசைகள்

4. கவர்னர் விஜயம்

5. ஸ்ரீகாந்தன் புனர்ஜென்மம்



## 1.4. A Critic

Kalki was also a good critic himself. He had definite notions of his own about theme, plot, characters and language in short fiction; and he had expressed them in some of his articles. They throw light upon his own practice of the art. An understanding of his theories would help us to appreciate his works.

**1.4.1. Kalki's theory of the art of short fiction:** In the preface to the collection of Vinthan's<sup>1</sup> short stories, 'Mullai-k-kodiyal',<sup>2</sup> he writes, "it had been the practice in Tamilnad for a long time to write short and long fiction about one particular caste alone. The writers as well as readers belonged to that group - namely Brahmins. Hence, stories were written about them, and the style was Brahminic Tamil. But, once the readers from other castes also increased in number, then arose the complaint about the language used in stories. Thereafter, stories were written about other castes also. However when the author happened to be a Brahmin, the descriptions were naturally not very appropriate. Even if the author takes much pains to write in a typical non-Brahmin setting in pure non-Brahmin Tamil, yet, at times, mistakes such as the exclamation 'Ata Rabana'<sup>3</sup> -peculiar to Brahmins and alien to other castes - occur, and protrude glaringly in the eyes of the critics.

"Another danger was also there. In a story, there are bound to be good as well as bad people. Whatever was written ridiculing the Brahmins — Some times it was portrayed that a character (a Brahmin), with his head shaven, was taken in a procession mounted on a donkey - nobody objected to it. But, If any such thing against other castes were written, a controversy definitely arose. Hence, even non-Brahmin writers wrote only about Brahmins, leaving alone other castes.

“All these things are deeds of the past. Nowadays, the problem of caste is almost dead in the field of Tamil literature. The situation has come to the stage wherein one could write fearlessly about any caste. At this stage, the modern renaissance writers come to light. They have started writing about the poor labourers of this country, following the Western writers.

“Leaving the Mirasdar, Thasildar, I.C.S. officers and advocates, they have begun considering the poor peasant, the mill labourer, rickshawala and the porter as their heroes. But, with whatever sympathy and artistic talent they write, the stories, in spite of being good in other respects, fail to ring true to the readers.

“One who is unaccustomed to manual labour writing about the labourer; and one who has never trodden on dust writing about the troubles of peasants, can write only sentimentally about them. Those stories may even possess all the good aspects of a short story; yet, they would never have that unique communion of heart that is the result of genuine communication.

“In order to write stories that reflect the truth, writers must rise from the poor and the labourers; and, their writings should possess the essential artistry, too.

“Modern men of ambition and great literary geniuses state that only such stories that could deeply stir the minds of the readers are true literature. *If it is true*, then there is no doubt that *Vinthan's* stories are good.

His style is simple but powerful. He does not trouble the readers with incomprehensible old terms of the Sankam Literature, or with the meaningless and merely pedantic renaissance Tamil. Neither does he try the patience of the readers with rhyming words in every sentence and in every

line; nor does he irritate them by using the unreadable slang, under the pretext of writing 'colloquial spoken tongue'. He uses a simple style, with the sole intention of making his writing understood by the readers.'

These views, expressed by Kalki, in a critical review of one of his contemporary's short fiction, reveal his attitude towards the mastery of that form. His ideas, we learn from the above review, are

1) Fiction, a common means of enjoyment to all, should have no restriction whatsoever in the choice of characters or theme.

2) the language should neither be highly pedantic and thereby puzzling to the ordinary reading mass; nor should it come down to the level of slang words and colloquial language. As *William Hazlitt* points out in his illuminating essay on prose style, it should be a 'familiar style'; used with the sole purpose of making the author's ideas understood by the readers.

3) as *Jane Austen* did, writers should have first-hand knowledge of the materials they are handling - be it a mere description of nature or the characters and situation.

4) the stories should ring true to the readers. In other words, they should possess the essential 'illusion of reality' that is responsible for the dream that readers enjoy while reading fiction, and

5) the themes should be light and optimistic, reflecting the brighter side of Man and Nature (this is latent in the big 'if' he puts while quoting the views of those whom he has termed as 'modern ambitious men and literary genii').

1.4.2. The application of his theories in his works: These theories have greatly influenced his practice of art. His characters, as it would be seen under the headings

'Characters and Characterisation', belong to many different castes and positions in life, possible in the world of fiction. People belonging to various social levels appear in his stories — the poor peasant addicted to drink, the wealthy mirasdar of the village, a newly appointed young and enthusiastic overseer, an old or retired I.A.S. Officer; an innocent suburban girl, a sophisticated and highly educated lady. Since as we learn from his personal life, he had the opportunity to move with people of all walks of life, it is no wonder that he depicts them convincingly in his plots. They are indeed true to life.

His language is an easy flow of the familiar and standard dialect of Tamilnad that could be understood without effort by people throughout the region of Tamil speakers. As it would be seen under the heading 'Language and Style', his is a 'manipravala' style—a mixture of Tamil, English and Sanskrit. However, the ratio of mixing has a logic of its own, and one could boldly say that he has adopted a style highly suitable for Tamil short fiction - appealing to the common man and at the same time not unpleasant to the scholars.

That he wrote only about those things which he knew well, is very clear, because his stories are natural and unaffected. Also, as we see from his personal life, we understand that though he had spent much of his life in cities moving among high society people, his early life had been spent in the village. It may be surprising to believe that he comes from a family of village Karnams and he has also passed the examination held for selection for the post of Karnam.<sup>1</sup> This explains to some extent his access to the intricate workings of a village panchayat. He speaks quite

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1. Information received while talking with 'Sunda'—the author of Kalki's biography entitled 'Ponniyin Puthalvar' பொன்னியின் புதல்வர்)



assuringly about Karnam, Thasildar and all village officials. Thus we find, as he has implied in his review of Vinthan's short fiction, that he has written only about what he thoroughly knew. He had thus produced stories displaying great illusion of reality.

**1. 5. Kalki's personality :** Apart from his views about the art of short fiction, his personality also has had an influence on his creations.

For instance, we understand that in his opinion, love at first sight common among the youth, is foolishness. Love, which is generally the topic of interest of most stories, the point on emphasis in most themes, the centre of conflict in several plots, in short, the axis around which most of the stories revolve, appears in Kalki's stories too. Also, we find his characters are ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of love. Yet whenever he gets a chance to speak a word in the form of an 'aside' he expresses his low opinion of love at first sight.

The influence of his personality over his art is so great that at times it even mars the effect of the stories--as it would be seen later while analysing the intrusion of the author's personality in the sphere of the short story.

Kalki never hid himself behind his work. He always preferred coming to the front, addressing the readers now and then, commenting on characters, the turn of plot etc than receding to the background to let the story unfold itself gradually. Some of his views, he expresses bluntly; some are hidden under comments; some are spoken by his mouth-pieces who appear as characters in his stories.

This habit of Kalki - of revealing himself in his stories, reminds us of the remark: "It sometimes happens that the author's views on beauty, life or similar subjects make a stronger impression in his short stories than in his novels. The light of his sensibility is not falling, as in novel, with the

same strengths on a irregular surface, with the result that the contours appear far more sharply etched in light and shade".<sup>1</sup>

### 1.6. Kalki's role in the development of Tamil short stories

The quality worthy of appreciation in Kalki is that he did not stop with criticising the growing art of short fiction, but, as a journalist actively engaged in writing he suggested ways and means of improving the genre in Tamil and demonstrated them, too.

In the nineteen thirties, a few who engaged themselves in reading western literature, joined together and formed a circle with the intention of exchanging their views, enjoyment and appreciation of good literature. The circle gradually widened and *T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliyar* headed the list. Kalki had an important place in the circle.<sup>2</sup> Since he never stopped learning things, and since it was his custom to practise what he learnt, he obviously tried various methods to introduce into Tamil what he enjoyed in foreign literature. Fortunately, he was a journalist and possessed two powerful means—his pen and his journal.

For the betterment of Tamil fiction as well as to increase the sales of his magazine, he made his writings highly interesting. He tried every new means to popularise Tamil Short Fiction. One of the means he adopted for that purpose was the conducting of short story contests in '*Ananda Vikatan*'. He announced a weekly prize of Rs. 50/- for the best short story published in his journal.

Thus, we find him doing everything humanly possible for the betterment of his journal and consequently for the improvement of the art of writing short fiction. These attempts prove his interest in the art, and as it will be seen resulted in his mastery of the art that led him to success and recognition in the field of Tamil short fiction during his period.

1. *Junzo Shuno*, *The Kenyan Review*, No. 126, Issue 4, Vol xxxi, 1969, p. 95

2. Introduction by T. K. C. to Kalki's book *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu*, p.7

## Chapter 2

# Theme

### 2.1. The role of theme in fiction

The artist recreates a reality and presents it to us in a fashion in which we see its essence clearly. This essence of reality is the theme of any Art.

In music, the word 'theme' means, 'a short tune which is repeated, expanded etc.'<sup>1</sup> In literature, theme is the idea which the author wants to communicate, it is the life-giving nucleus around which other substances revolve; in fiction, it is the *pallavi*<sup>2</sup> of the song—the very soul of it.

It would be interesting to note here that in Greek mythology, themis is the goddess of Law and Equity.<sup>3</sup> From this, perhaps, can be deduced that in Literature, theme is the revelation or presentation of fundamental laws—natural or ethical.

All arts in a way, embody and express the observation of artists. Any observation unaided by reflection won

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1,3—*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, F  
Edition Revised, 1956.

2 — പല്ലവി

be sterile though presented in art form. Even the imitative theory of art includes the notion that art should give us not only pleasure, but also insight into the nature of reality.

Hence, theme is an essential aspect of any art, and particularly in short story which aims at singleness of effect.

## 2.2. Kalki's attitude and approach to fiction

Many of the authors, of past and present, explain the theme of their writings and the stimulus behind them. But Kalki has not done so in his writings which range from essays and reviews to biographies and fiction.

The fact that Kalki has not expressly stated a philosophy of his own, does not mean that he has no point of view. We can apply to Kalki what *Charles Morgan* has remarked about *Thomas Hardy*, "He stood on a hill top and from it surveyed experience, and it was his own hill-top. He was not inconsistent in the sense of being without distinct individuality, he was not forever blown hither and thither by the opinions of others..... He preserved his integrity, guarded his individuality, looked out from his own hill-top. But he did not look only North or only South or East or west. He did not fix upon a favourite view and say, "This is truth there is no other." He surveyed the whole landscape of experience with what eyes he had and said to us: "Look; what do you see with your different eyes?" And we looked, and though we did not see what he had seen, we saw what we had not seen before and might never have seen but for his visionary flash."<sup>1</sup>

What is it then, Kalki enables the readers to see? "Ideally he enables them, looking out from the point of view of their own individualities to see their own experience a light of Truth,—in a light, not the light, for there are  
y."<sup>2</sup>



### 2.3 Kalki's themes

2.3.1. *Social reforms*: The entire lot of stories in the collection entitled **Bankar Vinayaka Rao** advocate prohibition. Among them, *Chinnathambyum Thirudarkilum*<sup>1</sup>, is an allegory where all the vices of mankind appear as characters. Untouchability is condemned in *Visha Manthiram*<sup>2</sup>. *Kamalavin Kalyanam* and *Subathirayin Sakotharan*, speak of the necessity of abolition of child marriage and allowance of widow-remarriage. In *Kadithamum Kanneerum*<sup>3</sup>, the readers are made to realyse the necessity of women's education. *Thanthaiium Makanum*<sup>4</sup> speaks highly of the value of patriotism, the pressing need of the pre-independence days.

2.3.2. *Greatness of love*: Kalki has written a number of stories where love is the dominant theme. *Orrai Roja*, *Mayilaikkalai*, *Malathiyin Thanthai*<sup>5</sup>, *Madathevan Sunai Katharakkallan*<sup>6</sup>, *Vaira Mothiram*, *Bavani*, *B.A., B.L.*<sup>7</sup>, *Rangadurkkam Raja*, *Kaithiyin Prarthanai*<sup>8</sup>, *EnDeivam*<sup>9</sup>, *S.S. Menaka*<sup>10</sup>, *Tiruvalunthur Sivakkolunthu*<sup>11</sup>, and *Natakakari*<sup>12</sup>, are stories which deal with love, the obstacles in its path and its ultimate triumph.

2.3.3. *Character revelations*: Kalki has written also a few stories where superficially, we find a humorous presentation of certain incidents that are apparently meaningless. However, on closer study, one is surprised to find the subtle way in which the stories reveal, by implication, the peculiarities of human mind and conduct. *Puli Raja*,<sup>13</sup>, No. 888<sup>14</sup>,

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. சின்னத்தம்பியும் திருடர்களும் | 2. விஷமந்திரம்          |
| 3. கடிதமும் கண்ணீரும்            | 4. தந்தையும் மகனும்     |
| 5. மாலதியின் தந்தை               | 6. காதலுக் கள்ளன்       |
| 7. பவானி பி.ஏ., பி.எல்.          | 8. கைதியின் பிரார்த்தனை |
| 9. என் தெய்வம்                   | 10. எஸ்.எஸ். மேனகா      |
| 11. திருவழுந்தூர் சிவக்கொழுந்து  | 12. நாடகக்காரி          |
| 13. புலிராஜா                     | 14. நிர். 888           |

*Vasthathu Venu* <sup>1</sup>, *Engal Ur Sangeethappotti* <sup>2</sup>, *Ithu Enna Sorkkam* <sup>3</sup>, *Veedu Thedum Padalam* <sup>4</sup>, *Theeppiditha Kudicaikal*, *Cinimakkathai* <sup>5</sup>, *Governor Vijayam*, *Tharkolai*, <sup>6</sup> *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu*, *Srikanthan Punarjenmam*, and *Idintha Kottai* are cases in point. The last three stories treat of adolescent foolishness that attaches much and undue significance to what it mistakenly imagines as genuine love. *Tharkolai*, most beautifully asserts the justification for living. The confidence that is necessary to try to overcome Fate by human efforts, is the theme of the story. *Governor Vijayam* is another excellent humorous piece that has deep meaning. The nature of man's ambitions, and his efforts to gain recognition in the eyes of high officials are finely stressed with great subtlety, and brilliant touches of humour. *Theeppiditha Kudicaikal* is an indirect attack on politicians ridiculing their ways of winning votes from the public through preplanned activities which are made to appear accidental. *Veedu Thedum Padalam*, is apparently an account of a person's efforts to find a house for rent. But the twist the author gives to the story turns it into a warning against the presence of parasites in society. *Engal Ur Sangeethappotti* ridicules the ways in which prizes are given. Kalki emphasises the irony of how unworthy people get unduly honoured by inferior judges whose drawbacks are unknown to others. *Vasthathu Venu* subtly explains the superiority of mental intelligence over physical stamina. *Ithu Enna Sorkkam* beautifully brings out the fact that achievement of a goal often falls short of the expectations of the man who craves for it.

Thus we find that Kalki's stories, though primarily meant for entertainment, do possess a significance. They convey the author's understanding of life and human nature.

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. வஸ்தாது வேணு       | 2. எங்கள் ஊர் சங்கீதப் போட்டி |
| 3. இது என்ன சொர்க்கம் | 4. வீடு தேடும் படலம்          |
| 5. சினிமாக்கதை        | 6. தற்கொலை                    |

They deal with themes which have great relevance not only to a section of society, but mankind in general.

#### 2.4. Ethical value of Kalki's themes

*2.4.1. optimism :* Quite often we find people appreciating or decrying an author for his selection of a particular theme. There are certain authoritarians who demand that art be moral by portraying what is accepted as good by religion and society. They would have fiction describe only the optimistic or bright aspects of our everyday world.

On the other hand, we find also the extremely contrary views among critics. Some hold that truth is a higher quality than beauty. The merely beautiful in art seems petty to them. Since life does not consist of only the beautiful, art which is a reflection of life should depict not merely the beautiful.

It is true that only natural laws could be universal and that ethical laws at best can only be relative. What is good in one place, at one time, may not be such at other places and at other times. Even in the case of an individual, we find differences of opinion, at different levels of age, education or culture.

As far as Literature is concerned, any subject would be suitable for artistic representation. The artist is at liberty to choose his subject. In fact he should be allowed to do so since, restriction or imposition of any kind may lead to artificiality. Art is full and beautiful only when it is unrestricted. The artist should not be denied the choice which Nature enjoys, if he is to be as natural and beautiful as Nature which he is imitating.

Nevertheless, since literature has great influence over the lives of individuals it would be better to be careful in the choice of themes. If we analyse Kalki's themes, we find that they are of an optimistic and sublimating nature.

Tragedies that depict the fall of 'good' are very rare in Kalki's writings and even in the few occurrences, the fall is due to the weakness inherent in the character. Cynicism and pessimism do not touch even the periphery of Kalki's thematic circle.

2.4.2. *Universality* : Besides being optimistic, great or true literature is universal in its outlook.

For instance we may cite *Maupassant's The Necklace*. The story is about the vanity of women that leads to self-destruction. The story has universal appeal as it is applicable to all, irrespective of nation, colour, race, or religion. Though Maupassant tells the story of a particular woman, the derived fact is applicable to mankind in general.

A story with a local or limited theme may win appreciation for its manner of presentation or other excellence. But it can never win wider appreciation, as the theme will be of interest only for a select few.

It is interesting to note in this context, that Art, which is in a way a "particularization" - the point of view of a single man from his own angle - is appreciated best when it has universality.

Most of Kalki's stories are local in colour - depicting problems of his days - political, social or ethical. For instance, his stories in the collection '*Bankar Vinayaka Rao*' advocate prohibition which is indeed a noble theme. Some of his stories deal with problems such as women's education, equality of women, patriotism, the vice of early marriage etc. Though these were the burning problems of his day, they have lost their intensity now and they are now read only for other reasons than for their thematic value.

But there are stories like *Governor Vijayam*, which operate on a wider area of interest. Their appeal is of a universal nature. They present factors common to all humanity — like the craving for recognition in society.



## 2.5. Aesthetic value of Kalki's expression of themes

There are several modes in which an author may express his theme. They could be classified under two main categories, i. e., explicitness and implicitness. An author may state his theme frankly, in clear terms. Sometimes it may be suggested in the title itself, or repeated in the story at frequent intervals. Some authors give an additional emphasis to this, by setting aside a whole paragraph exclusively for explaining the significance of the theme. This may sometimes deny the reader the thrill of discovering the significance of the theme by himself. As *Nancy Hale* expresses her experience, "What I mean by meaning, what I look for in a short story, is the reverberation of significance beyond the matters immediately under observation. I want to be able to look up from the end of a story and then slowly, as what I have read sifts down, to have the flower of relevance open for me." <sup>1</sup> Anyone would agree that 'do it yourself' jobs, though clumsy at times, give fuller enjoyment than getting objects ready-made.

*Value of suggestion in Short Fiction :* When the theme is merely suggested, and not explicitly stated, it acts as a sort of stimulant to the reader. It gives the reader the freedom to ruminate over the significance of the theme, and analyse its relevance to his own life or to the conditions of society.

*Danger of obscurity :* Nevertheless, the technique of suggestion should not be carried too far. Abstract painting may claim superiority over other kinds in its infinite suggestiveness but it can impress only a select few. Art, it must be remembered, cannot be confined to a limited circle. It ceases to be art if the circle of enjoyment is very limited. Art is also for enjoyment of the many.

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1. *The Realities of Fiction*, 1963, Macmillan & Co., Ltd, London, p. 129.

As *Nancy Hale* observes “There are some who prefer not to know what they mean. They may even consider it glamorous not to know. But clarity is the best principle. It is not at all an easy thing to achieve. Clarity is not obviousness. If one's subject and one's meaning are subtle, then, to express them with clarity is, ipso facto, subtle too. It is not a good idea when good writers attempt to be subtle about what is obvious, or when they are obscure, if it is possible, by whatever toil, to be lucid.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, limited suggestibility has its due merit in Art. An author can be suggestive and stimulating, but not at the risk of being vague, elusive or obscure.

#### 2.5.1. *Explicit statement of themes in Kalki's stories*

*In Titling*: Some of Kalki's titles themselves suggest the themes as we find in the case of, *Pudu Overseer*<sup>2</sup>, *Vasthatu Venu*, *Ithu Enna Sorkkam*, *Saradaiyin Thanithiram*, *Kamalavin Kalyanam*, *Governor Vijayam*, *Tharkolai*<sup>3</sup> and *Paladaintha Bangala*.<sup>4</sup>

However, as it would be seen under the heading, ‘Titling’, some of the titles some times do not refer directly to the theme or the main idea of the story. Very often the theme is suggested through subtle indirection.

For instance, let us consider the title *Vasthatu Venu*. The story is about a man, who took great pride in his physical strength and who used it to suit his own whims and fancies; who had his own way in the world, even if it meant putting an end to those who crossed his path. The story goes on to illustrate how his pride was shattered by a man of great mental strength and patience.

The conflict of the story is between physical strength and mental courage; between might and right; between muscles and justice. Ultimately the mind wins over the merely physical.

1. Ibid. p. 131

3. தற்கொலை

2. புது ஓவர்சியர்

4. பாழடைந்த பங்களா

Still Kalki has chosen the physical as the title. The adjunct 'Vasthatu' hints at the irony and gives additional emphasis to the theme that stresses the superiority of intelligence over mere brute strength.

*Expressed through plots:* In some of Kalki's stories, the themes have been stated explicitly through the plots themselves. In *Visha Manthiram*, for instance, a highly orthodox Hindu is made to realise that contrary to the existing belief the presence of an untouchable does not in any way spoil the power of his craft - to cure people bitten by poisonous insects. Similarly, the stories in the collection 'Bankar Vinayaka Rao' suggest the significance of themes like prohibition through the manipulation of plot.

*Author's explanation :* In some cases, Kalki himself turns a preacher and conveys the main significance of the theme through a narrator or a character. For instance, in *Onpathu Kuli Nilam*,<sup>1</sup> we understand the theme while listening to *Seenivasam Pillai's*<sup>2</sup> son's remark: "After all they are our relatives. What does it matter even if they have illegally taken possession of this small piece of land? This dual has resulted in waste of money, and has also created an enmity between us."

2.5.2. *Implicitness.* To the great enjoyment of his readers, there are a number of stories where the themes are implied in the action and characterisation. In *Thookku thandanai* and *Lanjam Vankathavan*, Kalki implies, how fear comes as Yama in the lives of the dishonest and unscrupulous cowards. The story *Thunthaiyum Makanum* on the surface refers to the value of loyalty to the sovereign. The story is set in the period of the great Maharashtra Warrior and King, *Veera Sivaji*. However, as *Bharathiyar* has done in his *Panchali Sapadam*, Kalki has indirectly pointed out the need for patriotism among Indian people in the then-prevailing circumstances. The story implicitly is a call for participation in the freedom struggle.

*Ejamana Visuvasam*, beautifully brings out the irony of fate, in the typical *O. Henry* style. *Mohan* dismisses the office watchman, plotting to set fire to the office building and claim the insurance money, to make good the loss incurred in business. How could he have expected so much fidelity from his watchman as to come for duty even after he had been unreasonably, unexpectedly and callously thrown out of his job? Yes, the unbelievably sincere *Veerasamy*, now the self-appointed honorary watchman in charge, patrolling the office building as usual in the night, unwittingly shatters his master's plans by calling for the help of the fire-service, thus saving the property.

Kalki's skill lies in his technique of bringing out the irony of fate through sheer suggestion. In a manner generally unusual to him and found only in some of his stories, he has expressed his theme through suggestion in an adorable way, which blends brevity and entertainment. Similarly, in *Kadithamum Kanneerum*, the importance of women's education is stressed through the ill-fated life of *Savithri* who is made to lead a life of frustration merely because of her inability to read a simple letter written by an enthusiastic young man who comes forward to marry her, then a young widow. Left on her own to decide her future, she gets educated later and spends her life as the head of an institution of social work. Instead of melodramatically relating her story from the beginning, which would have spoiled the effect of suggestion, Kalki makes the end the starting point for his story and portrays *Savithri* as calmly relating her past, thus taking the reader back to her early years. This is a very modern and effective technique.

Another story where Kalki has expressed his theme very subtly is, *Tharkolai*. *Jagannathan*<sup>1</sup> tries to commit suicide by throwing himself before the train, since he is ashamed of his inability to pass the B.A. degree examination even in the third attempt. He realises the foolishness of his decision



and recognises the importance of living - the urge needed to succeed in man's struggle for existence through thick and thin-when he meets another person arriving at the same place with the same motive but for a different reason. The other person has passed in the examination, but is suffering because of unemployment. This strange meeting stimulates their thinking and gives them a new courage to face life. They both decide to jointly start a concern and 'try, try and succeed' in life. The beauty lies in the fact that Kalki has not resorted to sermonizing or soliloquy to drive home the basic idea.

Nevertheless, Kalki who has expressed his themes either explicitly or implicitly, and who has been subtle and suggestive in a few of his stimulating stories, has digressed in a handful of stories.

2.5.3. *Digressions* : *Kamalavin Kalyanam* is a story which demands, through the emotive and suggestive presentation of the story's incidents, abolition of the injustice of elderly widowers marrying young girls, and the consequent sufferings. But, this theme with contemporary appeal is presented in a fashion that permits plenty of digressions. People who read the story would surely enjoy the humorous comments and sudden twists the plot takes.

Similarly in *Puli Raja*, the author's effort to make the episode fantastically humorous, throws into shadow the main issue and fails to throw light on the intended significance of the story.

2.5.4. *Crossing the line-mark* : *Subathirayin Sakotharan* is a story that resembles *Kamalavin Kalyanam* in many respects. One cannot deny that the author has stressed his idea well in this story, which speaks of the futile attempts of a loving brother who tries twice to stop the marriage of his sister with a very elderly man. It would have been a good story, but for Kalki's introducing another idea also

into it. The author has not stopped with pleading for the abolition of the practice of elderly widowers marrying young girls. He has also inserted the most forward view of widow remarriage, towards the end of the story. The attempts of the girl's brother - Subathirayin Sakotharan, after whom the story has been titled - fail both the times and the unfortunate girl is doomed to marry the old man. But the brother, who fails to stop the marriage, succeeds in not letting the old man live with his sister. She becomes a widow and he is sent to a lunatic asylum. However, his friend fulfils his desire and marries the young widow - the still fresh fragrant flower of morning, pure and laughing in the rays of sun.

2.5.5. *Arriving at the wrong coast*: One is surprised at and appreciative of P. S. Ramaiya's remark<sup>1</sup> about Kalki's story *Ciranjeevik Kathai*,<sup>2</sup> in his review of the Manikkodi period, which shows how highly he praises its artistic value. Though a modern critic he is like the Sankam poets who never failed to appreciate and sing in praise of another poet's talents; But one wonders whether Ramaiya's verdict could be accepted *in toto*.

Kalki starts writing a story about a man who decides to lead a new life of strict regularity and discipline. A retired man, with a whole day's leisure at his disposal he plans every minute of the days to come. With all good intention, he resolutely begins his morning exercises. On realising that he has planned far beyond his abilities, he stops in the middle and decides on a less strenuous exercise of a mild walk along the beach. The story could have very well stopped there. Then atleast the story would have humorously served to point out mankind's habitual failure in carrying out the new year or any other special day's resolutions which usually do not progress even half-the-way. But instead, the story ends depicting salt-satyagraha, an event utterly unrelated to the story.

1. Deepam, Oct., 70, p. 13.

2. சிரஞ்சீவிக்கதை

One dare not assume that in this story Kalki has tried to covertly point out the mob that gathers unintentionally in the footsteps of a leader since that would be an insult to the movement as well as the persons involved in it. The ending mars the essential unity of effect.

Another defect of Kalki is his not carrying out fully what he very often promises. For instance the story No. 888 begins with the author, promising to deal with three things. But the promise is not carried out. The story is about a person who, tempted by his dream, tries to get at a hidden treasure which he thinks is located inside a well. In his covetousness to acquire it without the knowledge of even his neighbour he tries singlehandedly digging the earth. The story ends with his getting imprisoned for the charge of counterfeiting currencies. What connection does this story have with Kalki's remark in the very beginning of the story?: "I have considered establishing three ideas. They are: (1) Desire never goes unfulfilled; (2) Astrological predictments are sure to happen; (3) In 'Kali Yuga', - I do not know of other eras - one cannot ascertain that good people would reap good and the bad would suffer."

## 2. 6. Educative value of Kalki's themes

The imitative, expressive and affective theories of Literature spring from three different notions of Art respectively.

1. The artist presents experience and is not a teacher.
2. He presents experience and is a teacher incidentally, and
3. The artist is essentially a reformer.

Since we have already seen that a critic should recognise the author's freedom in the choice of themes, we could safely conclude that presentation of an ideal is the purpose of writing a thematic story and, the understanding

of it by the readers is the desired effect. Nothing else could be expected of a short story.

As *Morgan* beautifully and elaborately discusses, "A-story is not a moral agent ; it is not an educational agent ; and people who praise the drama as educational, are praising it for accidents, not for its essence ; nor is Art, as the later Tolstoy argued, an agent of utility. A great story is an imaginative flux and that is all."

It is true that truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the ultimate end of a work. Yet, if communication of pleasure seems to be Kalki's immediate purpose, that will only distinguish the character of the author and not the class to which the work belongs.

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1. Quoted in *The writer and His World*, p.98



## CHAPTER 3

# Plot

### 3.1 What is plot

The term 'plot' designates the chain of events in a story and the principle which knits them together in a cause-effect relationship. In every story, things must happen, and in a certain order, and it is the order which distinguishes one kind of plot from another.

In other words, the mere facts of the story in the chronological order-as when the reader tells what the story is about to his friend - is the content or the subject matter, whereas their arrangement in order of author's presentation in order to achieve the desired effect, is the plot.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2 Basis of plot :Conflict

Fiction is too large a subject to be seen in the same fashion by different minds, but there is one point on which nearly all studies are agreed. Conflict is its perennial theme; almost every story centres around some struggle internal or external.

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1. Theory of Literature. Rene Wellek And Austin Warren, P. 140

Actually, there are only two sources of drama, on being man's relation to his environment and the other being man's relation to man. The first exhausts itself since the author must keep searching for some other new environment; Whereas the second is inexhaustible in that man's relationship to man is infinite in its variations. "Somebody has well said (that) to set the maximum desires of a character at maximum intensity against maximum opposition results in maximum drama."<sup>1</sup>

The plot, it is obvious, need not necessarily be limited to physical conflict. There may be mental conflict between forces of good [and evil; or it may occur within the mind of a single person, the forces for good opposing those of evil within his own temperament.

Plot, trap and dramatic conflict mean more or less the same thing, the only difference being that trap grows out of plot or conflict. Trap is the factor that is responsible for creating reader-interest. The main character is confronted by a seemingly insoluble situation, caused by the opposing force—the villain, by impulses within himself or by outward circumstances beyond his control. He is trapped and apparently cannot extricate himself, trapped by a love he does not want or cannot get; by a life he cannot change, by a habit etc., This creates suspense in the reader's mind and makes him follow with interest and anxiously await to know, the outcome of the plot which is gradually developed to a climax. The usual stages in the story pattern while the plot is developed are, the situation, deadlock, denouement, rising action, catastrophe and falling action. The outcome of the plot decides the effect—whether it is a comedy or tragedy.

### 3.3. Conflict in Kalki's Stories

Kalki has employed both the types of conflicts in his stories. Man versus environment in *Rangadurkkam Raja*,

*Onpathu Kuli Nilam*,<sup>1</sup> *Arasur Panchayat* <sup>2</sup> etc., and man versus man in *Thappili Cup*,<sup>3</sup> *Lanjam Vangathavan*, *Thookku Thandana*, etc. It needs pointing out that the latter type is more in number and superb in excellence of execution. Play of fate and chance also intervene in Kalki's conflicts as it would be seen later in this chapter.

3.3.1. *Nature of Conflicts*: Modern writings consist of revelation of the fact that 'good' is not always good and vice versa; and in demonstrating that our accepted customs and behaviour in modern society are not necessarily either good or correct. In other words, the modern writer often discards the traditional plot pattern of good as opposed to evil; of hero as opposed to villain. Kalki too, mostly aims at and produces often hopeful realism. Nevertheless, his characterisation does not follow the traditional lines since the hero-villain extremities are absent in his stories.

3.3.2. *Moments of Conflicts*: Regarding the choice of conflict, it is to be noted in this context that selection of a particular event in the life of characters - the selection of the moment of conflict — also decides the success of the author's presentation of it, through the key-hole of his writings. Speaking of moments, one cannot help (but) thinking of *Kumaran Asan*,<sup>4</sup> for his selection of a wonderful moment in the life of *Sita*, the main character of the epic *Ramayana*<sup>5</sup> to write his famous work upon the *Sinthakulam of Sita*<sup>6</sup>. *Sita* is nearing her life's end. She has lived a life of glory and joy, as well as of sorrow and sufferings. She has been immersed in the devoted, pure love of her husband *Rama*, but she has also had to endure the tidings of suspicion.

1. ஒன்பது குழி நிலம்

2. அரகூர் பஞ்சாயத்து

3. தப்பிலி கப்

4. குமாரன் ஆசான்

5. ராமாயணம்

6. சீதையின் சிந்தாகுலம்

Poets wrote of her unrivalled beauty and glorified her chastity; but people spoke of her stay at Lanka and questioned her purity. *Kumaran Asan* has chosen a moment when she is alone in her hermit's cottage. She has ample time to reflect about and over the past. She tearfully thinks of her life full of ups and downs. What a wonderful moment for a poet to capture in his mind. 'Emotions recollected in tranquility', pour out of his pen with great intensity.

Such a choice of moment is also seen in *Pudumaippithan's* story *Sapa Vimochanam*<sup>1</sup>. He has chosen a moment in the life of the puranic characters - *Gauthama*<sup>2</sup> and *Akalikai*<sup>3</sup>, that single moment, with all its impacts of the past, reflection of the present and uncertainty of future. The puranic and epic writers were satisfied with *Rama's* granting *sapa vimochanam* to *Akalikai*. To them, the problem was over once the wrong was set right by patient endurance under the curse. But whoever thought about the after-effects? Though a saint, yet, *Gauthama* is a human being with feelings as strong as any ordinary man. Though *Akalikai* has proved her innocence and purity to the world, and has also endured a severe punishment for an unfortunate happening that was beyond her comprehension while it occurred, yet, could they continue to live normally as before as if nothing has happened in their married life? How much mental adjustment is needed? How much sympathetic understanding is essential? How much patience is wanted to bear the intolerable sight of the accusingly - pointing fingers of other women who almost always fail to understand the misfortune of their own sex? How much moral courage is needed to begin everything once again? What would be the reactions of *Gauthama* and *Akalikai* to each other? How would the society welcome such a reunion? What are the obstacles that

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1. சாபவிமோசனம்

2. கௌதமன்

3. அகலிகை



could come in their way?— All these problems are posed before her, and *Pudumaippithan* has chosen this moment in their life — a moment never thought of in his style by anybody during all these centuries through which the story has passed and remained.

Kalki's choice of moments are entirely different. Local in colour and setting, they are universal only in their implications. Moments of adventure, pathos, humour, and fall of idealism are his choice.

### 3.4. Construction of plot in Kalki's stories

Despite the fact that the component elements of fiction are all present in some degree in every story, one writer may choose in a particular story to emphasize the characters and to minimize theme or plot: another writer may prefer habitually to give stronger emphasis to plot than to the characters; and so on through endless variations. This variation in emphasis is one of the deciding factors in the construction of plot. Hence, an analysis of plot should begin with finding out the factor of emphasis in the story.

3.4.1. *Classification of Story Interests*: Many attempts have been made to classify story material on the basis of the patterns in which it can be used or the effects which it can be made to produce. 'The story of dramatic incident', 'the love story', 'the humorous story', 'the psychological story' and 'character sketches' are the classifications used in Professor *Benjamin A. Heydrick's* little collection of 'Types of the Short Story'<sup>1</sup>. These are based not only on kinds of material but also on ways they can be used. Similarly in Mr. *J. Berg Essenwein's* 'Writing the Short Story'<sup>2</sup> we find short story divisions based on "types of humanity", "moral

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1, 2. Quoted by T. H. Uzzel in *Narrative Technique*, pp. 98, 99

ature", "occupations", "locality", "wonder", "social classes" and "emotion". Here we have fundamental classifications of subject matter mingled with story patterns and effects.

Based upon the fact that all emotional effects can be put under four heads according to the materials from which they derive, Uzzel suggests the following divisions :

Emphasis on character (Story of characterisation)

Emphasis on an event (Plot story)

Emphasis on setting (Atmosphere story)

Emphasis on a general truth (Thematic story)

Being economical as well as exhaustive, this classification has been followed in the presentation of this thesis. This chapter attempts an analysis of Kalki's plots with a view to finding out whether he has succeeded in emphasizing the desired effect through the construction of his plots.

3. 4. 1. *The Thematic Stories* : A thematic story 'says something' ; it not only entertains the reader but also influences his conduct and his ideas about life. The difficulty with the thematic story is that it is a story with an idea and not all writers have ideas ! Most writers, indeed, see life as pictures and not as problems. Their reactions, in other words, are emotional and not philosophic, and a certain philosophical turn of mind is indispensable for success in this type of story.

No doubt Kalki had definite views regarding problems and this is evident through his comments on characters, turns of events and plot - endings. His mode of talking directly with the readers adds more to the revelation of his views. Also, as it could be seen in the chapter on 'Theme' Kalki's stories are definitely thematic in the sense that they do have some significance - they carry some idea of the

author about life, its problems and the people, to be conveyed to the public. But Kalki's intention of creation is centered mostly in interesting presentation of plot and characters. His stories are thematic not because of any deliberate care and effort on the author's part but because of his innate talent for writing fiction that automatically turned his writings purposeful, with a meaning and significance to be conveyed to the world of the reading public. Hence, it is no wonder that themes are present in his stories but mostly pushed to the background for the benefit of plot and characterisation.

*Selection and Suggestion* : The stories which Kalki consciously and deliberately wrote to present a theme are those in which he advocates prohibition, and a few more. In the construction of plot of these stories, Kalki has been very careful to select those - and only those - events, that are essential and related to the point of emphasis in the story.

*Omakkutti Mudaliyar*,<sup>1</sup> the hero of '*Deivani*',<sup>2</sup> struggles to come up in life just in order to make himself suitable for *Deivanai*. He opens a toddy shop. *Deivanai*'s father himself falls a prey to the habit of drinking, and dies leaving his second wife and children without a penny. *Omakkutti* hesitates a while to shoulder the responsibility. Nevertheless, his love wins and he decides to marry *Deivanai*. But, when he learns the fact that *Deivanai* too is addicted to toddy, his love turns into disgust. He forgets her.

Kalki's aim in writing this story is to point out the consequences of addiction to alcoholic drinks. He does not care about the love story of *Omakkutti Mudaliyar*. Hence, he develops the plot and ends it without any serious complications or twist of events. The revelation of *Deivanai*'s weak-

ness comes as a surprise and shock—but there ends the story without any further development. The end is all the more emphatic since it makes the readers reflect pityingly about the 'could-have-been' of the love story, but for *Deivanai's* weakness. Even the practical *Omakkutti Mudaliyar* decides to marry the girl of his dreams and get entangled in the responsibility accompanying her; but even the sentimental and loving *Omakkutti Mudaliyar* refuses to share his life with the very same person if she is a drunkard. The unnecessary burden of two more souls in his family is not as disgusting to him as the mere sight of a drunkard is. A true and noble love that is strong enough to withstand the hammering of poverty and responsibility, is shattered to pieces and gradually ceases, by the thin stream of alcohol. What a wonderful way to emphasise the destructive nature of the habit of drinking? What a stimulating manner to end the plot of an otherwise ordinary love story, into a story that gives room for speculation?

It is not the ending alone but the entire story that has been handled wonderfully by the author. The author has not digressed at any point in the story. He does not even care to introduce or individualize the members in *Deivanai's* family. The protagonist *Omakkutti Mudaliyar* alone gets the needed attention. Thus, the plot has been handled with great selection and suggestion and results in unity of idea and effect.

*Govindanum Veerappanum* <sup>1</sup> is another story that advocates prohibition, but in a different way. *Govindan* and *Veerappan*, both work in the same factory and earn the same wages. *Govindan* brings home the entire sum intact and spends it shrewdly. Neither a miser nor a spendthrift, he is happy and content, and able to even save a little. *Veerappan* goes straight to the toddy shop on the weekly wages

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1. கோவிந்தனும் வீரப்பனும்.



day and returns home with a meagre amount. His wife quarrels with him and he beats her. Their little boy also suffers and they spend the days starving and quarrelling. The author does not give long sermons on the after-effects and consequences of drinking; he has merely portrayed two strikingly contrastive pictures—a 'home sweet home' of peace and happiness, and a ruined cottage that is nearing destruction. The reason for the difference is made obvious not in words but through the plot itself. The story consists more of dialogue than of author's explanatory words.

The only objection that could be raised is the presentation of the 'too good' and 'the too bad' in the plot. Life is not a bed of roses; nor is it full of thorns and twigs. If perfect happiness is impossible under any circumstance, equally impossible is a state of utter dejection pervading all through the days. Life is full of ups and downs where one can only expect for maximum possible happiness even under the most favourable circumstances, and one is bound to get the natural consequences of abnoxious character even under the least controllable circumstances. Even with all the good nature of *Govindan* and his wife, and the happy home atmosphere of affection and playfulness, one's life is bound to have tides and ebbs; Even with all the weaknesses of *Veerappan* and his wife, one can be surprised at Nature's mercy in sprinkling a few drops of the scent of happiness over them. Life cannot be as uniformly happy as we see in *Govindan's* Life; nor can it be as monotonously sorrowful as in the other's life. The pendulum of normalcy has to be oscillating if the balance of life is to function properly. However, one does not expect actual reality in fiction but only an illusion of reality. Also, plausible imagination extended up to the limit of tolerable exaggeration is an allowance given willingly by the readers to the writers, in order to take them into a dreamland. Moreover, if the clouds of reality would spoil the brightness of the stars of poetic truth, the fiction writer is at liberty and even obliged to wipe them away in order to get the proper, clear background.

The intention of the author in the story of *Govindan* and *Veerappan* is to point out the differences in their normal daily-day activities due to the differences in their habits. The drunkard only spoils his life whereas the other person leads a peaceful life. This is the point that the author wants to emphasise. He has chosen to present a single day's activities in order to bring out the contrast. When the stage is set and the curtains are raised no wonder we see a perfectly rehearsed drama. Not that the actors are ever as perfect in their lives, only that they do their best when they are before an audience. A 'model day' has been presented and the reader, fully aware of the possible ups and downs, is satisfied with the illusion of reality. Life, by itself, has its own problems which can affect anyone's home life; but drunkards lower even the normal standard. That is the point of emphasis in the story. Hence, Kalki cannot be blamed as sentimental, idealistic or romantic on the grounds of his presentation of 'perfect happiness' and 'irrevocable drudgery'. His subject needs such treatment - a presentation of the extremes - in order to emphasize the point. The author has succeeded in expressing his view precisely and clearly, untarnished by questions of reality. His economy in words, selection of incidents, and suggestion of the theme—all result in a good thematic story.

It is really surprising that Kalki's approach is perfect in matters of economy and precision, whenever he chooses to be so. It is to be regretted that he did not intend to write more number of thematic stories. His stay at *Tiruchengodu Gandhi Ashram*<sup>1</sup> and his involvement in the political and social problems of his days' India has resulted in these thematic stories which he wrote, we learn from the preface, while his stay at Gandhi Ashram and published in the journal *Vimochanam*<sup>2</sup> edited by *Rajaji*.<sup>3</sup> All his thematic stories are good from the point of view of emphasis.

1. திருச்செங்கோடு காந்தி ஆசிரமம் 2. விமோசனம் 3. ராஜாஜி

3.4 2 *Character stories*: "There are three kinds of audiences; thinkers, who demand characterisation; women who demand passion; and the mob who demand action." <sup>1</sup> Kalki who has written many stories of passion and action, and who has shown great interest in his characters and their characterisation, has written only a handful of stories of characterisation - even less than his thematic stories.

*Dramatisation of unique characters*: Stories in which the effect depends upon characterisation are character stories. There are several ways of revealing character in short fiction. One is by subjecting it to the supreme dramatic test and that is the most powerful of the methods of characterisation.

For instance, let us analyse Kalki's character story, '*Pudu Overseer*'.<sup>2</sup> The effect to be made in that story (which is obvious from the outcome of the plot) is, thrill at seeing the character win in struggle for his ideals. The conflict is between the hero's desire to live idyllic literary life of high ideals and the environment that forces him to reconcile with the materialistic and practical world. The initial complication arises even when *Sambandam*<sup>3</sup> argues with his uncle, and challenges to adhere to his principles, come what may. It develops when he is actually employed as an overseer in a village that is 'ruled' by *Udaiyar*<sup>4</sup>. It reaches a climax when *Sambandam* refuses to accept bribery from *Udaiyar* and turns blind towards his illegal and amoral activities. The crucial situation ends tragically when materialism wins with the help of false and fake evidences. Though the main character fails to win in worldly life, yet he is definitely successful in carrying out his challenge. The main character-trait—his resolute devotion to truth, honesty and integrity—is beautifully brought out by the outcome of the climax. *Udaiyar's* change

1. Victor Hugo quoted by Uzzel in *Narrative Technique*, P.218

2. புது ஓவர்சீயர் 3. சம்பந்தம் 4. உடையார்

of mind and the consequent material gain in *Sambandam's* life only proves, the author's natural bent for writing happy endings. The story really ends with *Sambandam's* standing fast to his ideals even at the cost of his job and security in life. The development is unnecessary and only weakens the emphasis on character. Idealistic men need not necessarily and always be glorified for their convictions. It is not so in actual life. Their thriving in life is occasional; their success is mostly accidental; their glorification is often dependent more upon other influential and practical reasons than upon their integrity. Hence, the author need not have followed the traditional pattern of ending a story that revolves around a change in one of the characters, with material gain to the man of principle. However, as it is pointed out in the chapter on 'Characters and Characterisation' the reason given for the change in *Udaiyar's* character is quite acceptable and the characterisation thereby turns subtle and realistic.

*Revelation of inner-self:* Another type will be the revelation of the true self of the main character. Nothing is truer of human beings than the fact that they are not what they seem. Speech seems to be used more to conceal than to reveal the real motives of our acts. *Srikanthan Punarjenmam*, is an example of this type of story. The main character poses as a true lover and a patriotic, but when the occasion demands patience and courage—when he meets a crisis in his life—he exhibits his cowardice. This character is in sharp contrast with its counterpart, *Vasunthara*. She is a widow tortured by her mother-in-law. She is driven out of her home. She lives with her father. Inspired by the call of the Indian leaders, she takes part in the freedom struggle movements. She meets *Srikanthan* who is inspired by her enthusiasm. He too fights against the British rule and both of them get imprisoned. *Srikanthan* comes out first but does not wait for *Vasunthara* who, on



being released from the prison, comes hopefully to meet him and start a new life. To her great disappointment she learns that on the very same day he is getting married to a girl less than thirteen years old, at Pondicherry. She bursts into tears and decides to lead a secluded life in a 'Seva Ashramam'<sup>1</sup>. Her hopes are extinguished, and in the ashes Srikanthan's character is distinguished.

While this type of character story reveals character, it is not dramatic revelation; the reader is impressed not so much by sharing the character's experience, as he does in the dramatic story, as by the surprising truth of the revelation and by the ironic incongruity involved in it.

*Presentation of a consistent act of violation* : Still another way in which a character may be effectively revealed in a narrative is by an act which is a consistent violation of some law or custom which society has ordained for its preservation. The impressiveness of this type of character-revelation lies not in the surprise but in the shock deriving from another pattern of incongruity. The character acts in violation, not of what he was thought to be but of some law or custom whose observance is deeply embedded in the consciousness and habits of the mass of his fellow citizens, among them the reader, too. The classical example of this type of story is *Merimee's* famous story, '*Mateo Falcone*' which recounts the killing of a son by his father for disobeying the corican law of hospitality. To the readers, who do not share the father's devotion to this custom, but regard the protective love of a father for a son as a foundation of society itself, the act is appalling. In this shock and contrast lies the power of such act. Other examples of this type in Tamil fiction could be had from the several stories which revolve around the axis of

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1. சேவாசிரமம்

duty-consciousness. Usually a conflict arises between love and duty, and the protagonist decides in favour of the latter at the cost of the former. Nevertheless, writers inclined towards romanticism usually release the hero from the trap without any injury to him. The general pattern in such stories is to make the hero achieve both. Kalki has followed this design in the plot of *Thanthaiyum Makanum*.<sup>1</sup>

*Kesavan*, a poor peasant, is grieved when the Nawab forcefully takes away his pretty wife. Though she preserves her prestige by committing suicide, yet, he is not reconciled. He takes an oath not to remarry; he also decides not to give his son in marriage since he does not want to leave his future generation in a nation that does not care about its citizens. However, his son gets entangled in the meshes of love. The father and son serve under *Chatrapathi Sivaji*.<sup>2</sup> On a day when the circumstantial evidences are against the son, the father proves his loyalty by trying to kill his own son. The son, however, escapes and the father learns the next day from *Sivaji* himself that actually the son was on an errand, carrying a letter to *Sivaji's* army-general and that it was such a secretive mission that *Thiruvengkatam*,<sup>3</sup> the son, could not disclose it even to his father. Even after learning that his son has preserved the secret by escaping at the risk of his life, *Kesavan* finds fault with him for having spent the valuable time arguing with his father. He is of the opinion that *Thiruvengkatam* ought to have unhesitatingly killed his own father and left the place for carrying out the king's mission. Thus the chivalry of the father and the shrewdness of the son are brought out on the foil of patriotism.

An average father and son could not have behaved the same, under similar circumstances. It takes great strength

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1. தந்தையும் மகனும் 2. சத்ரபதிசிவாஜி

3. திருவேங்கடம்

of character to remain loyal to the sovereign at the cost of his son's and his own life.

3 4.3. *Complication Stories*: Complication interest is the basis of one of the four fundamental patterns into which all short story material can be classified. It simply means that the reader would be more interested in some unique or striking event or twist of fate than in development of character, atmosphere or theme. It is a narrative whose single effect results mainly from the dramatic presentation of some striking event. The central complication when presented dramatically and with emotional unity, produces the single effect.

Plotting the complication story is much more difficult and at the same time a more fascinating task, than plotting a character — story. It is interesting because it often necessitates inventing backwards. With most character stories the writer has his character in mind, and builds his events up in chronological order, starting at the beginning of the story. Whereas, with most complication story plots, it is necessary to begin with the end of the plot and work backwards to the beginning.

Most of the stories of Kalki — in fact, a major portion of them - are complication stories. *Gandhimathiyin Kathalan*,<sup>1</sup> *Chandramathi*, *Kaithiyin Prarthanai*, *Bavani*, *B A. B. L.*, *Kadithamum Kanneerum*, *Vaira Mothiram*, *Zamindar Mikan*, *Mayilaiikkulai*, *Rangadurkkam Raja*, *Katharakkallan*, *Orrai Roja*, *Malathiyin Thanthai*,<sup>2</sup> *Veenai Bavani*, *En Deivam*, *Saradaiyin Thanthiram*, *Kamalavin Kalyanam*, No. 888, *Puli Raju*, *Onpathu Kuli Nilam*, *Tharkolai*<sup>3</sup> and '*S.S. Menaka*' are examples.

1. காந்திமதியின் காதலன்

2. மாலதியின் தந்தை

3. தற்கொலை

The striking factor in the plots of Kalki's complication stories is that] they are never pure complication stories which would be devoid] of character-interest, and merely expanded anecdotes. Kalki always infuses character-interest and situation—interest in the plots of his complication stories. In fact, as it is pointed out while dealing with his modes of characterisation, the onset, development and outcome of his plots depend upon the character-traits of his characters.

The complications usable in the complication type of story are ofcourse of infinite variety. In most of Kalki's stories, complications arise out of turn in events or through character - traits.

*Complication by Character traits:* In *Pudu Overseer*, the character's adherence to his ideals; in *Police Virunthu*<sup>1</sup>, Kandasamy's jaziness and following of short cuts to earn his living; in *Kaithiyin Prarthanai*, the illiteracy of the heroine; in *Veenai Bavani*<sup>2</sup>, *Tiruvalunthur Sivakkolunthu* and *Natakakari*<sup>3</sup> the inferiority complex and suspicious nature of the main characters; in *Prabala Natcattiram*<sup>4</sup> the unadjusting and contrastive temperaments of the husband and wife, and in *Madatthevan Sunai*, the greediness of the old man, begin the conflict.

*Complication through turn of events:* In the other complication stories, it is the action that is responsible for the onset of conflict — the loss of the bullock in *Mayilaiikkalai*, the arrival of Sakuntala in *Kinziyaliyin Kanavu*, the plot to kidnap the heroine in *Chandramathi*; the Nawab's carrying away of Kesavan's wife in *Thanthaiyum Makanum*; the interference of *Umakanthan*<sup>4</sup> in the life of *Seshadri*<sup>5</sup> in *Bavani B. A., B. L.*, the bombing and the consequent evacuation, in *Zamindar Makan* and *Rangoon Mappillai*, and the hero's suicidal attempt in *Rangadurkkam Raja*.

1. போலீஸ் விருந்து
3. பிரபல நட்சத்திரம்
5. சேஷாத்திரி

2. நாடகக்காரி
4. உமாகாந்தன்



*Outcome of plots in complication stories: Surprise Endings*

The outcome of most of Kalki's plots are happy endings thoroughly satisfying to the passionate reader who approaches fiction with an escapist mentality. Among the comedies, most of the stories have a surprise-ending caused by an unexpected twist in the events near or at the end of the plot. It is to be noted in this context that in these surprise ending stories, We meet only with complication surprise and not with character surprise. In other words, unexpected changes and shocking revelation in the character-traits of the main characters are comparatively rare in Kalki's stories; only the events are given a twist to surprise the readers. Another factor that is worth mentioning is the comic irony found in these surprise endings.

When *Gadothkaja Rao's*<sup>1</sup> persistence in acquiring the haunted house for rent, even after a thrilling adventure during his nocturnal expedition through its dimly lit rooms and boltless doors, results in his losing it in the hands of the rent controller; when *Vasthathu Venu's*<sup>2</sup> unending efforts to cause trouble to his innocent neighbour, result in bestowing an award of honour upon his rival; when *Kandasamy's*<sup>3</sup> collection of donation for an imaginary farewell party to a non-existing police officer gets into the hands of a real police officer and is really used for the very same purpose for which it was collected; when the 'qualified judges' for music and dance competitions are found to be respectively partly deaf and half blind; - all these situations which form the surprise—endings of the plots in Kalki's complication stories are ironical and comic.

*Tragedies*: It is really surprising that Kalki who has a natural bent towards humour is capable of writing tragedies that pierce the hearts of the readers.

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1. கடோத்கஜ ராவ்
  3. கந்தசாமி

2. வஸ்தாது வேணு

*Srikanthan Punarjenmam, Grnthimathiyin Kathalan, Veenai Bavani, Kadithamum Kanneem, Vidhooshakan Chinnamudali* <sup>1</sup> *Arasur Panchayat, Deivanai Kethariyin Thayar* <sup>2</sup> and *Governor Vandi* <sup>3</sup> are touching tragedies in which *Fate plays cruelly upon the lives* of the characters. The stories become all the more tragic since the tragic end is met with not solely by the play of fate but also because of the weaknesses in the respective main characters. When the fall occurs due to their own fault, when their fort of happiness is shattered by their own temperament; when their lives are spoiled by their own actions—the sympathy that arises in the readers' minds is unfathomable.

*Weakness of characters:* When *Deivanai, Chinnamudali* and *Chandrakasan* lose their future happiness due to their addiction to alcohol; when *Muthu* meets with the accident that costs his life due to his momentary weakness of giving up his principle before the tempting words of the village official, when *Gopalasamy* <sup>4</sup> *Mudaliyar* ruins *Bavani's* life and his own happiness, because of his baseless suspicion; when *Vasunthara* is left alone to suffer in disappointment because of her keeping faith in an unreliable character such as *Srikanthan*; when *Ganthimathi* ruins the lives of all the three—husband, her past lover and herself—through her momentary weakness which but fades soon, one could not but sympathise with these poor souls whose lives have been beautifully portrayed in the carefully conjectured plots of the respective stories wherein the author has selected the incidents that would build up the emotion and enhance the tragic effect.

*Play of Fate:* In *Veenai Bavani*, if only *Gopalasamy* had listened to *Kandappan's* <sup>5</sup> advice, he could have known the real motive behind her acceptance to sing in a concert soon

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1. விதூஷகன் சின்ன முதலி      2. கேதாரியின் தாயார்
  3. கவர்னர்வண்டி      4. கோபாலசாமி
  5. கந்தப்பன்

after the announcement of *Gopalasamy's* death in a train accident. But, Fate has destined not only the failure of their love but has also so ordained that *Bavani's* true love and loyalty to the Mirasdar should for ever go unrecognised. *Gopalasamy* never gets an opportunity to learn the truth. In *Ejamana Viswasam*, it is the strong hand of Fate that acts behind the watchman's loyalty and destroys the plans of *Mohan*. In *Arasur Panchayat*, we see that despite his constant and sincere efforts to wipe away the habit of drinking from his life, *Chandrakasan* succeeds only in the very end when he eagerly returns to his mother-land from Singapore with sweet dreams about his future, only to learn of his wife's disappearance from this world, following the footpath of her child. Thus, we find that Fate plays a heavy role in Kalki's tragedies.

*Play of chance in Kalki's plots* : similar role is played by chance and accident in Kalki's stories - not only in tragedies but in general. The single rose adorning the hair-do of *Manohari*<sup>1</sup> falling down without her noticing it and lying there unobserved by anyone else, to be picked up by the hero and kept safe (*Orrai Raja*); the arrival of *Sambandam* at the exact moment when *Uzaiyar* is attempting to flood the fields of his enemy by causing a breach in the bank of the lake (*Pudu Overseer*); the presence of the thief at the right moment and place, to bear the beatings of *Vasthathu Venu* and help *Veerasamy* not only to escape from the possible swelling of his body but also to win an award for having caught red-handed a thief of marvellous strength and cunning (*Vasthathu Venu*) are all examples of Kalki's use of chance and accidents for the development of his plots.

### 3.5. Reurrent elements in Kalki's plots

Another factor worth mentioning while discussing the

plots of Kalki is the frequency of occurrence of certain factors—repetition of certain incidents or situations - in his stories.

3.5.1. *Rumours* : That which stands foremost in number of occurrences is the inclusion of dreams and rumours. In *Puli Raja*, a fantastic account about the king's childhood is given in all seriousness with a simple remark in the end as to its true nature - that it is a rumour. Similarly, in *Paladaintha Bangala*,<sup>1</sup> the shop-keeper relates two entirely different ghost stories about the same deserted mansion, to two different people. When he is confronted with the crisis of happening to meet both of them at the same time and obliged to give an explanation for his mischievous conduct, he states still another - a third story - with the remark that he did not tell the truth first, for fear of incredibility. No doubt, in this atmosphere story, the rumours help to create fear, the desired effect. Yet, the fact that it is rooted in an illusion and not caused by real circumstances, spoils the mood.

3.5.2. *Dreams* : Kalki has introduced dreams in *Veedu Thedum Padalam*, *Subathiraiyin Sakotharan*, *Orrai Raja*, and *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu*, and illusions in *Lanjam Vangathavan*, *Thookku Thandanai* and *Governor Vandī*. The person who spends a whole night in a haunted house, dreams of several ghosts. The dreams help only to create an atmosphere and are not in any way related to the plot of the story. Also, even the atmosphere is confused since fear and humour are unharmooniously mingled. The author has every right to write about devils, ghosts and angels - only he should present a convincing picture of them; he should succeed in creating an illusion of reality. He should either picture them according to the existing beliefs - the traditional superstitions - about them, or he should cleverly invent a plausible imagination that seems

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1. பாழடைந்த பங்களா



realistic. In *Veedu Thedum Padalam*, the author has made the entire meeting ridiculous by the introduction of ghosts from well-known plays and films in English and Tamil.

Usually, authors write convincing episodes that appear like the natural development of conflict in the plot of the story, thereby giving the impression that the story is proceeding, and then suddenly reveal the fact that it is all a mere dream. In such cases, the dreams are so plausible and so related to the plot that the readers follow it with great interest and tension, and the revelation comes as a happy surprise (though annoying sometimes) that only adds to the enjoyment of reading the story. But most of Kalki's 'dreams' are not even dream-like; they are ridiculous, and their nature is so glaringly obvious from the very beginning that they spoil the essential illusion of reality.

The only two exceptions are the dreams that occur in *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu* and *Subathiraiyin Sakotharan*. In the former, *Raguraman*,<sup>1</sup> the hero, dreams of his success over his friends and fellow competitors in winning the hands of the Venus of the village, *Sakunthala*. The dream is not only plausible and realistic, but also helps to reveal the character, to create the necessary atmosphere and to have a connection with the forward movement of the plot. The contents of the dream help all the more to impress the theme - the foolishness of adolescence in matters of love and marriage - in the readers' minds. The characters appear true to life even in the dream, making it all the more appropriate and convincing.

In *Subathirayin Sakotharan*, the dream is not realistic but symbolic of the future events. He dreams that he sails on a space-ship moving towards the lunar surface. The moon is more than hundred times bigger than what is seen from

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1. ரகுராமன்

the world. His friend *Rajagopal*<sup>1</sup> and his sister *Subathra*<sup>2</sup> are accompanying him. Suddenly a cyclone starts and the space-ship stops moving. The travellers see a huge eagle-like bird with the face of a fox pouncing upon them. *Rajagopal* leaves his sister under the care of *Thyagu*,<sup>3</sup> and starts fighting with the hideous creature. Finally he succeeds in killing it but he does not join with his sister and friend. On the contrary he changes into an angel and flies up towards heaven. Finally *Subathra* and *Thyagu* are united happily in the bonds of marriage.

This dream is, no doubt, fantastic. But the symbolism is wonderful and real. It is quite common for human beings to dream such symbolic occurrences which can be explained in terms of future incidents. In this story, *Rajagopal*, his sister and *Thyagu* share the idea of travelling together throughout their lives (their sailing together in the space ship); they meet with an obstacle when marriage is settled between *Subathra* and *Ganapathy Iyer*<sup>4</sup> - an old widower (the arrival of the hideous creature); *Rajagopal* kills the bird (he kills *Ganapathy Iyer* when all his other efforts to stop the marriage fail) and flies towards heaven turning into an angel with wings (he dies after suffering from ill-health and imprisonment). Not only the occurrences but even the characters have been symbolised. We hear *Rajagopal* referring to *Ganapathy Iyer* as fox, and how appropriately the face of the eagle-like creature appearing in the dream resembles that of a fox?

Thus Kalki has introduced a symbolic, effective and convincing dream that adds to the creation of atmosphere in the story and also foreshadows symbolically the future

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1. ராசகோபாலன்

2. சுபத்ரா

3. தியாகு

4. கணபதி ஐயர்

events. Are we not reminded on reading this, of the dreams of *Kannagi*<sup>1</sup> and *Kopperunthevi*<sup>2</sup> in *Cilappathikaram*?<sup>3</sup>

3.5.3. *Illusions* : The illusions experienced by *Parankusam*<sup>4</sup> the I.A.S. official in *Lanjam Vangathavan* (meeting the deity of death), and the judge in *Thookku Thandanaï* (meeting the prisoner) - are very realistic, convincing and properly motivated. The judge whose mind is terribly vexed over giving a verdict against the innocent boy, throwing aside the alibi supported by such a truthful evidence as that of *Catagopa Acharyar*,<sup>5</sup> naturally plays havoc and that results in his death. The figure of Yama formed by the soot rising from the lantern, causes an illusion of having had a conversation with him.

3.5.4. *Journey through the past* : His plots in *Solaimalai Ilavarasi*<sup>6</sup> *Mohinitheevu* (a novelette) *Idintha Kottai* and *Mayil Vili Man*<sup>7</sup> are not only fantastic, but also show his love for writing maginary episodes based upon historical and literary evidences. In all these stories the narrator visits the place of historical evidence, to listen to a fantastic tale from a person who claims a long life that extends over centuries and centuries. The fantastic accounts resemble fairy tales.

Two more factors that receive repetition in the plots of Kalki's stories are, the life of artists with freaky temperaments and striking resemblance between two characters,

3.5.5. *Life of Artists* : *Tiruvalunthar Sivakkolunthu*, *Natakakkari* and *Veenai Bavani* - all the three stories are

1. கண்ணகி

2. கோப்பெருந்தேவி 3. சிலப்பதிகாரம்

4. பராங்குசம்

5. சடகோபஆசாரியார்

6. சோலைமலை இளவரசி

7. மோகினித் தீவு

based upon the lives of artists. *Aiyampettai Kandappan*<sup>1</sup> is involved in all the three plots. Being an artist himself, *Kandappan* is no doubt an appropriate telling medium who is also'd enough to have known people of the past whose lives were full of interesting conflicts caused by their own temperaments. Either an artist or a lover of arts gets entangled in the love of a girl who is either an artist herself or comes from a family of prostitutes. Once the initial infatuation—the period of mutual love, adoration and respect—is over, the shark of temperamental difference which was already present but only hidden by the flood of desire, protrudes above the calm stream of faith and rocks the vessel of happiness. *Kandappan's* efforts to pacify the lover's conflicts succeed in *Natakakkari* and *Tiruvallunthur Sivakkolunthu*; but fail in *Veenai Bavani*. In all the three stories the author has employed train and car accidents to cause important turns in the plot. The idea that is oft-stressed in *Dr. Mu. Va.'s*<sup>2</sup> novels, that artists have an unreliable temperament and that their lives are bound to witness ups and downs caused by their own weaknessess, is made clear in all the three above mentioned stories.

3.5.6. *Resemblances*: Striking resemblance between characters, is made use of in the conflicts of both the stories - *Rangadurkkam Raja* and *Bivani, B.A., B.L.* - only the treatment is different.

In *Rangadurkkam Raja*, the resemblance is made use of simply for the onset of the conflict. Two characters who resemble each other in every respect, fall into the sea on the same day at the same time for different reasons and from different ships sailing side by side but bound for opposite directions. When rescued, an interchange in their places occurs through accident. The people on board the

- 
1. அய்யம்பேட்டை கந்தப்பன்
  2. டாக்டர் மு.வ.



ship naturally mistake *Rangarajan* for *Rangadurkkam Raja* and refuse to consider his appeals and explanations. After the initial stage, the resemblance causes no more development in the plot. Also, the other character does not even appear in the story and is in no way related to *Rangarajan*. The resemblance is a mere coincidence.

But, in *Bavani B.A..B.L.*, the Public Prosecutor *Seshadhri*<sup>1</sup> and the prisoner *Umakanthan*<sup>2</sup> are step-brothers, resembling each other to such an extent that even the police are unable to differentiate between them. *Umakanthan* appears very late in the story and the mistaken identity helps to solve the problem and end the conflict. *Seshadhri*, the jealous brother of vindictive nature, wishing to take revenge upon his step-brother, changes his mind when he learns that there is no chance of his winning *Bavani's* love, and saves his brother from prosecution by posing like him and surrendering to the police. The relationship between the characters, the nature of the conflict, the role that the resemblance plays in the two stories - all these make the two stories entirely different pieces from the point of view of the author's purpose and the outcome of the plot.

### 3. 6. Defective plotting in Kalki's stories

The reasons for the defective plotting seen in a mere handful of his stories are lack of idea, unwanted additions, change of track, double-focussing and undue lengthening of plot and conflict.

3. 6. 1. *Lack of idea* : The humorous episode spun around the elections - *Theeppiditha Kudikaikal*, - no doubt presents

a true picture of politicians. But, the plot of the story is not developed around any definite idea. It is written simply as a single man's attempt to uncover the facts about the election stunts. The author has not concentrated upon the arrangement of events in the story that would build up the conflict to reveal the significance of the story. Hence, though endowed with a general theme of character—revelation, yet the story suffers from lack of point due to defective plotting.

3.6.2. *Unwanted additions* : In the story *Kaithiyin Prarthanai*, the story of the prisoner is an unwanted addition to the main plot. It is given merely to provide a pretext for *Kailasam's*<sup>1</sup> entering into the village, that results in his meeting with the girl he left on the eve of the marriage-day due to a misunderstanding caused by circumstantial evidences. No other reason than a strong impulse and wish on the part of *Kailasam* to revisit the place is needed. Is it not quite natural for any human being to be tempted to step into the place that stirs remembrances of past? Would it sound implausible if Kalki had not provided an additional motive in the form of a prisoner's request to deliver his Deepavali presents to his children living there? The episode may help for effecting a sentimental background to the story, but it is not in any way essential for the development of the plot. It only stands as an unwanted addition. But for Kalki's talent in blending the two unobtrusively, the story might have turned into a flop. As it is, it is glaring only to the eyes of a critic who starts analysing the plot step by step.

3.6.3. *Change of track* : In *Siranjeevik Kathai*<sup>2</sup>, as it has already been pointed out in the chapter on 'Theme' the story changes its direction and ends in a different track which results in lack of significance in the story.

3.6.4. *Double focus* : The complicated plots found in *En-Deivam*, *Thanthaiyum Makanum* and *Idintha Kottai*, are de

fective due to double-focussing. In *En Deivam*, the love story of *Ranganayaki*,<sup>1</sup> and the tragic, sacrificing life of *Sambamoorthy's*<sup>2</sup> mother *Chellam*<sup>3</sup> are two different stories each having the potentiality to serve as individual plot on its own. *Ranganayaki* loves *Sambamoorthy* but fails to get her parents' consent since they blame the conduct of his mother. She retorts that she is getting married to the son and is concerned only about his character. She points out that he cannot be held responsible for the alleged misconduct of his mother. This conflict by itself is a full story, reflecting upon society's taboos and revealing the strong character of *Ranganayaki*. But the author has taken the pains to include the entire story of his mother, - her husband marrying another woman without her knowledge and dying suddenly leaving the other wife and her son penniless, wherein *Chellam* intervenes and promises to the dying second wife to save her child, who is now blaming her for spoiling his happiness through her misconduct. This story is necessary only for the onset of the conflict and even for that, such an elaborate portrayal of her past life described with every minute detail is not essential. A mere mention of the suspicion about her conduct is enough and if at all the author wants to clear a doubtful atmosphere a short explanation regarding the birth of *Sambamoorthy* would have sufficed. Now, as it is, the two stories stand separately poiling the unity of effect.

In *Thanthaiyum Makanum* *Kesavan's* pledge begins a conflict. It is left in the middle; another conflict built around the loyalty of the father and son begins, and is developed to the end. The possible obstacles to the carrying out of the pledge and the resultant revelation of character-strength would have made a wonderful plot and it is to be regretted that the author has missed the chance. The development of the second conflict forms a separate story by itself.

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1. ரங்கநாயகி

2. சாம்பமூர்த்தி

3. செல்லம்

In *Idintha Kottai*, (1) the story of the narrator who visits the Cenji Fort and listens to a false account of a love-affair, only to learn later the real facts about it in newspapers; (2) the story of *Sukumaran*<sup>1</sup> and *Malathi*<sup>2</sup> during their previous six births; (3) *Sukumaran's* version of his story during this birth and (4) the real story that appears in the newspapers - all these are combined to form a complicated plot.

To state the story briefly, the narrator of *Idintha Kottai* visits the *Cenji Fort*<sup>3</sup> and meets a man who gives an unbelievable account of a love - affair that has continued through more than three centuries. He says that now in the seventh birth, he is awaiting for the arrival of his lady-love and that they would get married on that day at midnight. After two days the narrator reads in the newspapers that a poor village schoolmaster and the daughter of the wealthiest man in the village, unable to get the consent of the bride's father, have committed suicide at Cenji Hills. This complicated plot of 'story within story within story' surpasses the limitations and scope of short fiction.

3.6.5. *Unnecessary lengthening of plot* : In *Pudu Overseer*'', once *Samdandam* has proved beyond doubt, his sincerity and integrity, the conflict ends. But the author has unnecessarily lengthened the plot (as already mentioned also in other places in this thesis).

But for these handful of stories wherein we find defective plotting, all the other stories consist of well-plotted conflicts whose outcome satisfy the law of cause and effect.

### 3.7 Plausibility in Kalki's plotting

While remarking about the plot in short fiction *Summers* makes the following observation : "The short story contains deliberately selected details and incidents which may

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1. சுகுமாரன் 2. மாலதி 3. செஞ்சிக்கோட்டை



leave gap and questions in the reader's mind.',<sup>1</sup> This state can be appreciated when it gives room for speculation - when it is a stimulant. But, when the author's selection of events raises questions on the ground of plausibility, the reader's willing suspension of disbelief suffers.

In *Natakakkari*, the real reason behind the accidental explosion of the bomb is not given till the end; in *Idintha Kottai*, the readers are left to wonder as to why did not the spirit of *Malathi* roaming around the Cenji Hills, awaiting for the arrival of *Sukumar* during his seventh birth, meet him on the first day of his visiting the place; in *No. 888*, the arrival of *Venu*, along with the police to arrest his father remains unexplained since the author has not anywhere from the beginning involved him in the story's events.

### 3.8. Contradiction

Certain statments in his stories are contradictory. In *Veenai Bavani*, we hear the narrator, first saying that *Bavani* has written a will leaving all her properties to *Gopalasami's* children. Towards the end of the story, when he reveals the contents of *Bavani's* letter, he says that *Bavani* has left half of her property to *Gopalasamy's* children and half to the temple.

In *Idintha Kottai*, the narrator visits the Cenji Hills on a full moon day. He says that two or three days after his reaching Madras, he himself began to doubt his experience at the Cenji Fort. He continues to say that he was reminded of it on reading an account of the happenings at the Cenji Hills on the full moon day, published in a corner in the news-papers, released on the evening of the third day. But the Papers give the account as the happenings of the previous day.

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1. *Summers R. craft of short Fiction*, p.27.

### 3.9. Adaptations

Kalki is blamed as having written a few adaptations and not having the courtesy to make the proper acknowledgement.<sup>1</sup> To answer this charge, first we have to see whether he has really written adaptations; if so, how many, and which of his stories come into that circle.

We read the following remarks of *T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliyir*, in the preface he has written for the collection *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu*<sup>2</sup> “Among the fifteen stories published in this book, *Paladaintha Bungal*, *Mayilaiikkalai*, *Thanthaiyum Makanum* and *Vaira Mothiram* -all these four stories- have adopted the construction of English short stories. To say that they have followed the construction, only means that the author has used the frame-work. The drawing is his own. *Shakespeare* in English and *Kamban* in Tamil are genuine creative artists possessing real inspiration. The stories which they adopted were already there; using them as supporters they have built great mansions. When the author says that those four stories are adaptations that is how we should look at them. If we happen to ride in our neighbour's car, could we call our experiences as that of the car? Moreover, structure, plot and technique - all these aspects may add to the artistry but are not the essential elements. Characters and character-traits are the important aspects.”

This statement proves that (1) Kalki did write adaptations; (2) four out of the fifteen stories in the collection *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu* have been considered as adaptations and (3) Kalki had acknowledged the fact. T.K.C.'s remark has been quoted only to prove that Kalki had not lacked the courtesy to acknowledge when he adapted foreign works.

1. புனைகதை வளம், ம. இராமலிங்கம்,

2. பக். 24 பக். x

In this context it needs mentioning that *Rangadurkkam Raja*, *Bavani*, *B.A., B.L. Ejamana Visuvasam* and *Prabala Natchatiram* are cases in point where the characters, the main idea, the twist in the plot, the setting-all seem alien. Even if one leaves the first three since the method of adaptaing them to Tamil culture is comparatively good, one cannot set aside the fourth as Kalki's own creation.

Temperamental differences between husband and wife, being responsible for the onset of a conflict, is not an alien subject for the world of Tamil fiction. *Jeyakanthan's* <sup>1</sup> *Kokila Enna Ceythuvittal* <sup>2</sup>, *Dr. Mu. Va's Kari-t-thundu*, <sup>3</sup> and several others are undeniable proof for the presence of such a controversial theme in Tamil short fiction. Even Kalki's own *Alai Osa* <sup>4</sup> *Sivakamiyin Sapadam* <sup>5</sup> are in a way based upon the conflicting personalities of the partners. However, from the beginning till the end, one cannot help getting the illusion that one is reading a translation - not even adaptation but a literal translation - of *Kandekar's* <sup>6</sup> work. The history professor immersed in his work, remaining deaf to the call of youth and turning blind to the beauty and sweetness of his much-younger-than-him wife; his visiting sister who under-stands and sympathises but not interferences; the 'uncle' *Patchirajan* <sup>7</sup> who swindles the money and leaves the heroine helpless in the hands of cine-world; - do these people resemble the husband, sister-in-law and villain of Tamil short fiction - or Kalki's characters? Not only the onset of the conflict but also the development and ending are typical *Kandekar's* writings. Great men may think alike - but not just in a single case where-in the path is a deviation from the main line just for a short distance. The choice of theme and characters, the structure of plot, the treatment of the subject - everything sounds 'unKalkian' and resemble in every way, *Kandekar*. The matter shall rest there till the spade of concrete proof comes to uproot it.

1. ஜயகாந்தன்

3. கரித்துண்டு

5. சிவகாமியின் சபதம்

7. பட்சிராஜன்

2. கோகிலா என்ன செய்துவிட்டாள்

4. அலை ஓசை

6. காண்டேகர்

## Chapter 4

# Characters

### 4.1. The importance of characters in short fiction

The importance of characters in a short story is stressed reasonably and effectively by *M. Elwood*. The author explains that since all Arts aim at creating an emotional reaction on the part of the beholder, a piece of creative writing is effective only as it moves the reader emotionally, and that in stories, the basis of all emotional response in the reader is characterisation.<sup>1</sup>

The author accepts that plot is important, whether by plot is meant the skeleton of a pattern story or the structural basis of anyone of a dozen other types of stories, but, only asserts that there is something more important than plot, something that gives meaning, significance and life to plot, and that something is, character.

### 4.2. Kalki's Characters

*Frank O' Connor's* thought-provoking statement<sup>2</sup> that there is no such person as hero in a story but only a representative of the submerged population in society, seems not to suit Kalki's writings. We meet with real, typical characters individualised and presented convincingly.

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1. *Characters Make Your Story*, p. 4.

2. *The Lonely Voice* p. 116.



A short story should consist of real, life-like characters. This does not mean the presentation of an exact replica of a living model which may lower it to the level of a puppet. Also, it may lessen the essential universality of the character-traits. It is the attribution of the author of select characteristics to his characters, that makes them individuals—unique enough to be worthy of a protagonist, and at the same time, representing a type in real life, in order to be convincing. This wonderful combination of commonness and uniqueness accounts for the presentation of successful Characters in a short story.

Kalki's characters are real models in this respect. They have the needed blend in apt proportion. Only rarely do we stop to wonder at the plausibility or the possibility of existence of any particular character; seldom do we retreat in boredom at any glaring commonness in them. Kalki's characters are plain everyday folk with an individuality of their own to be remembered. And, their presence as main characters in the respective stories is justified by the extraordinary power of Kalki's pen that brings out through the simplest and humorous means, the *Thirivikrama*<sup>1</sup> within every *Vamana*<sup>2</sup>. Thus he successfully carries out the job of establishing the character as an individual in the reader's mind, which is of primary importance. While he does that, we get some definite views about his characters who come under a general pattern.

4.2.1. *The general pattern* : Kalki is branded by critics as a romantic writer<sup>3</sup>. That could be accepted as a fact to a certain extent. But, as far as his short stories are concerned, he has portrayed not only sentimental and idealistic characters, but also highly practical and realistic ones.

1. திரிவிக்கிரமன்

2. வாமனன்

3. புனைகதை வளம், பக். 20

It is interesting and worthwhile to note in this context that true to life, Kalki has portrayed young men as idealistic, and elderly people as practical, with a bit of cowardice and policy of non-involvement in affairs of trouble and at home. For instance, *Rangarajan* of *Rangadurkkam Raja*, and *Sambandam* of *Pudu Overseer* insist up to the end, upon adhering to their ideals. *Sambamoorthi* of *En Deivam*; *Raguraman* of *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu*; *Krishnan*<sup>1</sup> of *Mayilaiikkalai*, *Sukumara* in *Idintha Koitai*, and *Rajaraman*<sup>2</sup> in *Vaira Mothiram* are sentimental and romantic, and, Kalki has beautifully shown through them, the foolish infatuation of adolescence for beauty, love and idealism, that remains at first deaf to the voice of experienced elders, but learns at last the facts of life at the cost of prestige.

A humorous writer chiefly aiming at entertainment, Kalki always makes everything light, and portrays the humorous, bright side of every human trait, be it good or bad. He does not take sides and advocate openly any ideology of his own. He treats, with a sense of humour and equally both of them—idealistic as well as practical, romantic as well as realistic characters.

Among his female characters, we find women surprisingly smart, educated and sophisticated, endowed with wit and wisdom and able to tackle the problems that face them, as well as, young girls from suburban areas, full of innocent love and enthusiasm to live. *Malathi*<sup>3</sup> in *Malathiyin Thanthai*<sup>4</sup>, *Premalatha* in *Rangadurkkam Raja* and *Sakunthala* in *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu* are examples for the former. *Poongodi*<sup>5</sup> in *Mayilaiikkalai*, *Chandramathi* in the story entitled after her, and *Amirtham*<sup>6</sup> in *Arasur Panchayat* are examples of the latter;

1. கிருஷ்ணன்

3. மாலதி

5. பூங்கொடி

2. ராஜாராமன்

4. மாலதியின் தந்தை

6. அமிர்தம்

Old ladies play no prominent role in most of Kalki's stories. The only two exceptions are the characters in *En Deivam* and *Kethariyin Thayar*<sup>1</sup>. In both these stories, the mothers become responsible for the conflicts that develop, and the catastrophe. In all other stories, elders are pushed to the background; they appear scarcely and only to comment upon the incidents or characters.

Society gets an important place in some of his stories. We hear comments of people at appropriate places (*Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu*); we see them shaping the incidents of the story (*Subathiraiyin Sakotharan*); and we listen to their explanation of the character, situation and mood in several other stories.

Sometimes, certain characters resemble a few contemporary personalities. For instance, we learn from his short autobiography on *Three months rigorous imprisonment*<sup>2</sup> about a person who was having in his hands even after a long lapse of time, the front pages of *Hindi Bothini*. When we hear him speak of a similar character in *Kamalavin Kalyanam*, (*Gopalakrishnon Iyer*), naturally we think of them as parallel characters.

Similarly, it is obvious that he had definite persons in mind when he wrote about (1) *U.P. Ragavachari* in *Rangoon Mappillai*; (2) the various bigshots who attend a party in *Vaira Mothiram*; (3) the two characters who constantly quarrel with their entirely different views on several issues in the 'Letters to the Editor' column of newspapers, until the editor announces that no further discussion would be allowed and no more letters on the subject would be entertained for publication; and (4) the elderly man who frames and preserves the letters written by high officials and political leaders, to be shown proudly to visitors as proof of his cordial relationship with them (*Vaira Mothiram*).

It is quite possible to probe into the history of Kalki's life and enquire about his close friends and relatives, to find out detailed information about such masked references. But, to unearth or unmask them would neither be of use to anyone; nor would it be doing justice to the author who, it is obvious from his deliberate concealment of names, did not wish to reveal their identity. However, since in one of the cases the author himself has revealed the source, one is justified in revealing his habit of making such references in his stories which gain more life through such 'living' portrayals.

4.2.2. *Historical Characters* : It is surprising to note that Kalki, a reputed historical novelist, had not ventured into writing many historical short stories. Very few of his stories are based on historical events or settings. *Madathevan Sunai*, *Idintha Kottai*, *Solaimalai Ilavarasi*,<sup>1</sup> *Thanthaiyum Makanum*, *Mayil Vili Man*, and *Zamindar Makan* are examples. However, he had made use of historical characters only to form the background of the stories.

In *Thanthaiyum Makanum* the great Maharashtra Emperor *Chatrapathi Sivaji* appears. The main characters of the story, the father and the son, serve under him and prove their loyalty. However, it is to be regretted that the name of a very great warrior has been used for a very trivial cause of providing a mere background for a story.

The presence of the name of as great a soul as *Sivaji* in a story, could be justified only if he gets a prominent rôle in it, as the main character around whom or whose family the events are spun; or, atleast the events should be such, that their plausibility could not be questioned only by his presence in the story. Supposing a writer spins a story about a sculptor who took part in the construction of the

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1. சோலைமலை இளவரசி



*Taj Mahal*, then the name of the Moghul Emperor, *Shah-Jahan*, could occur appropriately in the story, even if he is pushed into the background, since the name is essential to create an illusion of reality. But, *Siviji* plays no such part in *Thanthaiyum Makanum*. Any imaginary name would have served the purpose.

4.2.3. *Abstract Characters* : Fear plays such a predominant role in a few stories that one feels its presence as one of the main characters as in *Thookku-t-thandanai*, *Lanjam Vangathavan*, *Ejamana Visuvasam* and *Vedu Thedum Padalam*. In *Thookku-t-thandanai*, a young boy *Thirumalai* is imprisoned in the period of the British rule in India on the charge of treason. He is alleged to have been engaged in acts of violence. The police bring the evidence of several eye-witnesses who swear that they actually saw him planting bombs under the railway lines. *Thirumalai* also has an alibi. He swears that at that time, he was engaged in a conversation with *Catagopa Acharayar* a man reputed for his truthfulness. The judge has complete faith in this evidence. However, the numerical strength of the police evidence gets more weight and the judge is forced to accept it and reject as falsehood *Thirumalai's* alibi.

The judge sentences the boy to death, but loses his peace of mind. On the eve of the day before the sentence is to be carried out, the judge spends a sleepless night. In the morning at about 4 O'clock, *Thirumalai* comes to his room and leaves after a small conversation. When the judge reads in the morning papers that *Thirumalai* died in prison exactly at 4 O'clock on that day, he freezes with fear to think of his mysterious meeting with the boy. His fear at the possibility of having conversed with a ghost kills him, though reports attribute his death to heart-failure.

In *Lanjam Vangathavan*, an I.A.S. Officer, engaged in amassing wealth by getting bribery from the public, meets

with a crisis when his acts become unbearable to the higher authorities who receive endless anonymous petitions against him. He learns that he is going to be served with an order, asking for explanation. Nevertheless, he decides to continue his way of life to reach the target of earning ten lacs (for which only fifty thousand is lacking), and then to face the consequences. He is well aware of the fact that atleast in order to save its own face, the Government would not take any drastic steps against [him. At the worst he expects a suspension order. It would not affect him at all, since he is going to retire in a few months.

One night when he is calculating his money and thinking of his future he imagines he meets *Yama*, the God of Death, who has come to take his life away. The officer pleads for an extension of his life but *Yama* refuses to give him even a few minutes. With the intention to conquer *Yama*, *Parangusam*, the officer, shoots himself to death.

Afterwards, we learn from the statement given by the *Dabethar*, that on that night when *Parangusam* thought he met *Yama*, the hurricane light had given out a lot of smoke and that the soot had formed on the wall, the shape of *Yama*. We understand that, on seeing it, the officer has had an illusion and was frightened to death.

4 2 4. *Fantastic Characters* : Kalki has dared to choose heaven as his setting in one of his stories. People dead and gone from this world and are residents in heaven, are the characters. Two of them were close friends in the world and are now happy to meet each other in Heaven — a place much coveted by them while living on Earth, but has proved a centre of utter boredom after entering it.

Even with such a choice of setting and characters, of which nobody knows anything for certain and anybody could question the plausibility, Kalki has managed to sound realistic.

Other fantastic characters occur in *Mayil vili Man*, *Puli Raja*, *Karirulil Oru Minnal*, *Kailasamayyar Kabara*<sup>1</sup> *Rangoon Mappillai*, *Veedu Thedum Padalam*, *Idintha Kottai* and *Solaimalai Ilavarasi*.

*Mayil Vili Man*, *Idintha Kottai*, and *Solaimalai Ilavarasi* more or less resemble each other in plot, setting and characters. As Kalki had the habit of launching sarcastic attacks on other writers if and when he did not approve of their ways and means, it is to be doubted as to whether Kalki wrote those stories to mock at *Pudumaippitthan's* works such as *Brahma Rakshas*<sup>2</sup>, *Kupatapuram*<sup>3</sup> etc. Though we are not certain about the facts concerning these stories, yet as far as the equally ridiculous story *Ciranjeevik Kathai* is concerned, there is no doubt that Kalki wrote it to point out sarcastically, the habit of 'Manikkodi' editors - of selecting each issue's best story and calling it as 'Ciranjeevik Kathai'.<sup>4</sup> Kalki's argument was how could one decide upon the immortality of a work of Art even before it was recognised by the reading public as good. Time should decide the value of anything. Hence, instead of a caustic remark which he never liked to make, he has expressed himself sarcastically in the form of a story.

#### 4.3. Character Types : Active Characters

Most of Kalki's characters are active. They determine what is to happen next and seem to control even the accidents. In such cases the opening of the story itself would establish the hero's goal and hint at some alternatives.<sup>5</sup> And, the central figure will either guide his fortunes safely through the crisis (as we see in *Rangadurkkam Raja*, *En Deivam*,

1. கைலாசமய்யர் காபரா

2. பிரம்ம ராக்ஷஸ்

3. கபாடபுரம்

4. சிரஞ்ஜீவிக்கதை

5. *Critical Approaches to Short Fiction*, p.12.

*Natakakkari*, *Madatthevan Sunai*, *Pudu Overseer*, *Malathiyin Thanthai* etc ....); or will shape the events ironically to bring about his misery or destruction (as in *Veenai Buvani*, *Ejamana Visuvusam Lanjam Vangathavan* etc ....).

Among the active heroes, in some of them we notice a change in attitude occurring towards the end of the story—the respective main characters in *Rangadurkkam Raja*, *Pudu Overseer* and *Natakakkari* are examples. Such characters could be called *dynamic characters* while, no such change occurs in the case of other characters who could be called *static characters*. In both the cases, the characters are active—no doubt, but in one case, the character undergoes a change—and is potentially dynamic whereas in the other, the events move while the characters remain the same. *Rangarajan* completely changes his attitude towards life and women, and is thus not only active but also dynamic; whereas *Sambamoorthy* undergoes no such change and thus remains static. (*En Deivam*).

*Passive Characters* : In contrast to these 'active' heroes, some of Kalki's characters are 'passive', in the sense that their actions do not propel the story's movement. As, *T.A. Stroud* makes it clear, to these characters, 'all episodes appear as accidents; the events (in these stories) can no longer be linked as cause and effect. Instead, they seem to be introduced to disturb the emotional balance of the central character and thus to facilitate a certain kind of change in him. In such stories, the hero moves from ignorance to knowledge about himself or others, even though what he comes to 'know' may be manifestly false. Since initially he has no goal except some vague desire to be happy or secure, he obviously will not determine what is to happen next or do anything more than react to the situations as they arise'<sup>1</sup>



*Lakshmi* in *Saradaiyin Thanthiram* who goes crying to her sister who solves the problem by tactfully giving a more or less psychotherapeutic treatment to *Lakshmi's* husband; *Gānapathirama Sastrikal*<sup>1</sup> in *Kamalavin Kalyanam* who, from the beginning to the end, takes no decision of himself but yields easily to the suggestions and threats of others; the narrator in '*Chandramathi*' who is simply an observer of the incidents; the hero in *Orrai Roja* who watches with fear, astonishment, curiosity and hope, the actions and reactions of the heroine; *Rajaraman* in *Vaira Mothiram* who is dragged by the current of love and ardour in the eyes of his lady-love—all these people are excellent examples for the presence of passive characters in Kalki's stories.

#### 4.4 Characterisation

'The only subject that is inexhaustible is Man' - remarked *Maugham*.<sup>2</sup> Man is an interesting subject to be studied and presented in fiction. But depicting him in stories is not an easy job since as *Bliss* [Perry explains in his *Study of Prose Fiction*, "Short story writing calls for visual imagination of a high order; the power to see the object; to penetrate through its essential nature; and to select the one characteristic trait by which it may be represented. A novelist informs the readers, of what his characters look like; and, if he does not succeed in making them real, they have a hundred other opportunities, before the novel ends; whereas, the short story writer has but the one chance. Hence, there is a necessity for restriction in choice and presentation of character<sup>3</sup>.

In an article in *Lippincott's* called, *The Philosophy of the short story* and later published in book form, *Brander-*

1. கணபதி ராம சாஸ்திரிகள்

2. *Maugham*, quoted by *Elwood*, p 1.

3. Quoted by *Kempton*, p. 65.

*Matthews* had made a statement so widely quoted that it needs mentioning here:

“A short story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion or the series of emotions called fourth by a single situation (and is thus distinguished from the story which is merely short)”.<sup>1</sup>

This proves that in short story writing, there can be no *development of character*. The most that can be done is to peel off an outer skin or mask, by means of an incident or two, in order to reveal that which is inside. The character will not change his spots; there is neither time nor place for it in short fiction. Once development comes in, it increases a writer's task enormously and only a few can surmount the difficulties.

Kalki has not ventured into developing a character in most of his stories. Even in the very few stories where a change in character occurs, (as in the case of *Rangarajan in Rangadurkkam Raja*, *Udaiyar in Pudu Overseer*; and in the attitude of all the characters in *Onpathu Kuli Nilam*, the author has been careful to present the change as the axis around which the story is spun and not as a development of character.

4.4.1. *Naming* : The naming of characters in short fiction is far more important than one realises,”<sup>2</sup> remarks Summers, and continues to explain its importance and value. He says that although in real life people's names may be entirely out of keeping with their dispositions or temperaments, yet, in the fictional world, a character is already half-characterised by the name he is given. He points out the habit of writers who sometimes deliberately employ names for people who are

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1. Quoted by Kempton, p. 65.

2. *The Craft of Short Fiction* p. 101.

just the opposite of what the names mean and then gradually break down the connotation of the name. He warns against the temptation of giving a character an ordinary name-probably the very first that springs to the writer's mind.

Whether by design or accident, Kalki has chosen simple, appropriate names for his characters. Also, there is another remarkable thing about Kalki's method of naming. In about sixty stories he has written, more than two hundred characters occur. Among them, appropriate to the art of short fiction, Kalki has selected those who need no special reference in the story and has left them out of his naming list. He has not cared to name the very insignificant, minor characters who are there merely to create an atmosphere, effect an illusion of reality and are passive observers or listeners - mere passers - by. Naming them for naming's sake would not be right. Kalki has cleverly omitted such an unnecessary element, thus avoiding confusion that could have possibly resulted from too many names in every story.

It is also surprising that repetitions are rare. This could be proved by even a mere superficial observance of the list given below. The list would also reveal the fact that true to life, Kalki adds to the names of his characters, the names of their respective native places, castes and occupations. He has also used pet-names, nick names, titles etc.

**Caste Names :** *Seshadri Reddiar, Gopalaswamy Mudaliyar, Vyagrapada Sastrikal, Kaccapeswara Mudaliyar, Kailasam Iyer, Ashtothram Iyengar, Appadurai Iyer, Veeranna Pillai, Periasamy Pillai; Sadaiyappa Mudaliyar. Sambandam Pillai, Govindaraj Udaiyar, Varaham Iyengar, Veerasamy Pillai, Krishna Konar, Perumal Konar, Omakkutti Mudaliyar, Appukkutti Mudaliyar....*

**Names of Native Places:** *Aiyempettai Kandappan, Poonthottam Bavani, Koolippatti Zamindar Kavadi Pillai, Tiruvalunthur Sivakkolunthu.....*

**Titles and Pet-names :** *Kabali Sundaram Iyer, Abohi Anandaraman, Vaikundachariyar, Sojji Sulochana, Vidooshakan Cinnamudali, Diwan Bagdoor Ashtothram Iyengar, Rao Bagdoor Vyagrapada Sastrikal, Diwan Bagdoor Kaccapeswaran, Anaikutti Mudali.*

**Occupations:** *Zamindar Kavadi Pilla., Raja Prithvisingh, Dabedar Chinna Kesavalu, Murugappa Kangani, Thalaiyari Muthu.*

**Names of Women Characters :** *Premalatha, Malathi, Bavani Renganayaki, Chellammal, Ammulu, Mrs. Lona Dutt, Sulochana, Seethalakshimi Ammal, Thangam, Janaki Ammal, Manohari, Mangammal, Poongodi, Amirtham.*

**Other names:** *Kesavan, Venu, Muthu, Rangarajan, Singaram.*

Thus we find that Kalki's portrayal of characters has a serious beginning ever from the naming—a minor detail which needs minute attention if an author wants to pay equal attention to all the aspects of characterisation and create the much desired effect, by suggesting the variety of all the aspects.

4.4.2. *Physical Description :* Physical description of characters is very rarely found in Kalki's stories. And, there are merely a handful of places where we get a very brief and to-the-point description of the characters. In *Idintha Kottai*, the telling medium of the story is visiting the *Cenji Fort* where he meets a young man. "He was a young man, sophisticatedly dressed in *Veshti* and *Jibba*. He had his hair cropped handsomely. His face was pretty. He appeared to be intelligent, too,"<sup>1</sup> is the description given by the author.



There are also stories in which Kalki does not care to speak a single word about the appearance of his major or minor characters. If one thinks of the pains he takes to describe as vividly as possible, the minds of his characters and the setting of the stories, one is bound to come to the conclusion that he does not intend to imprint his characters' physical attributes on his readers' minds. He is concerned more with the portrayal of their minds, and it should be accepted that Kalki's approach in this respect is highly practical and conducive to produce the necessary effect, since the characters of a story stay in our minds more by their attitudes and reactions to the events than by their physical attributes.

#### 4.5. Modes of Characterisation

The nature of even the simplest man is too complex to be presented effectively and convincingly in its entirety, even in a book. The wise writer uses all the mechanics and all the art at his command, to create the illusion of reality with a few charactertraits, while at the same time satisfying the reader's instinctive demand for the orderly procedure of cause and effect to a logical, dramatic and satisfying conclusion.

4.5.1. *Author's Explanation*: Rangarajan, the hero of *Rangadurkkam Raja*, is portrayed as a man of impulses. Kalki does not speak of his falling into the sea as a pre-meditated act. 'The young man was admiring the calm sea, the full moon, the broad sky and the uncountable stars. At that time he gets an idea in his mind and it turns into a decision quite soon'<sup>1</sup> This is how Kalki writes about the incident of his hero's jumping into the sea from the deck of the ship on which he has been travelling.

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<sup>1</sup>. மயிலைக்காளே, பக். 19

After this first incident of the story's plot, Kalki takes great pains to elaborately discuss the character of *Rangarajan* from early childhood. Though a long explanation, yet, it helps to understand his behaviour on board the ship and makes his action on impulse, unquestionable on the grounds of plausibility. In other words the detailed characterisation satisfies the law of cause and effect.

4. 5. 2. *Through speech and dialogue* : Next to author's explanation of his characters, the characterisation in Kalki's stories is done mainly through speech and dialogue of the characters. This is explained and illustrated under the heading 'Speech and Dialogue'.

4.5 3. *Through suggestions* : As *Sean O' Faolain* remarks, "Characterisation is something that can be no more than assumed in a short story. If one looks for a detailed characterisation, one finds only puppets, one does not therefore look for it - another tacit agreement between author and reader. Instead, we are given further hieroglyphics. We may, for example, be given a situation which always exposes some temperament or character; or conversation, if bright enough, reveals it; or gestures which express it, by which I do not mean that people make gestures - they are gestures, that and no more."<sup>1</sup> There are several suggestive means of revealing character.

*Through action and reaction* : *Mangammal*<sup>2</sup>, wife of *Vasthathu Venu*, exhibits the curiosity so very natural and becoming to women of any age, when she stands watching at the door step, the arrival of new tenants to the neighbouring house. They arrive in a cart with all their bags and baggage; and smart and neatly dressed, sweet-looking children of theirs. *Mangammal* does not even care to reply to her husband's call as he is seated before the plate in the course of his lunch, waiting for pickles.

1. Sean O' Faolain, *The Short Story*, p. 195

2. மங்கம்மாள்

It would be interesting to make a comparative note here of the character *Nagu*<sup>1</sup> in *Kamalambal Charithiram*<sup>2</sup> by *Rajam Iyer*<sup>3</sup>. Women seem to take such rights for granted. They are not afraid of their husbands, when it comes to such 'trivial matters', especially when the occasion demands all their attention, promising to satisfy their curiosity.

Another predominant feeling in *Mangammal's* character is, her innate jealousy. She could not bear to see any other woman enjoying life with more material comforts than what she has. What other justification she has to find fault with the new neighbours for having two cartful load of cots, mattresses, chairs, trunks, instrument boxes and other things? What is wrong if the children wore frocks? All these natural things annoy her unreasonably. Thus, Kalki has brought out her curiosity and jealousy through her reaction on seeing the would-be neighbours.

*Theeppidittha Kudikaikal* is a story where Kalki has not analysed the minds of his characters, and explained or commented upon their actions. He expresses everything through their actions-an admirable way of characterisation. His portrayal of the telling medium of the story, who takes the trouble of going to the place of *Koolippatti Zumindar*<sup>4</sup> just in order to learn how the least expected candidate *Kavadi Pillai*<sup>5</sup> succeeded in the election held in that area, shows that he is a man of curiosity whose regular and only job is probing into others' lives and gossiping.

The *Diwan Bagdoor* and *Raj Bagdoor* who drive away fast without even reducing the speed of their cars to look at the fire, clearly express the view of aristocrats over the

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| 1. நாகு         | 2. கமலாம்பாள்சரித்திரம், பக். 131. |
| 3. ராஜம் அய்யர் | 4. கூளிப்பட்டி ஜயீந்தர்            |
| 5. காவடி பிள்ளை |                                    |

sufferings of the poor. "It is none of their business! Haven't they got more useful work than listening to the grumblings of the poor? After all, there is the fire service that could fly to their help in such emergencies. Even otherwise what could they possibly have done in such a place? Mere waste of time : Above all, they have the support of the respective parties to take care of the voters. They need not worry about the 'worthless' votes of these people who could be called to their doorstep by a clap of their hands. Have they not money to buy the votes? Well-why should they stop then?"- These thoughts, we can imagine, running in the minds of those two people and, we understand them fully without any explanation of the author. That is wonderful. He does not mention a single word about the thoughts, not even comments upon their act; but merely says that they drove away fast, passing the place in a minute without stopping even to enquire.

4.5.5 *Through Interior Monologue* : Kalki uses this technique for detailed and minute characterisation. This is also discussed under the heading 'Speech and Dialogue'.

4.5.6 *Subtlety in Kalki's Characterisation* : *Srikanthan Punarjenmam* is a tragic story of the heroine's failure in love. *Srikanthan* inspired by the love and ardour of *Vasunthara* gets entangled in India's struggle for freedom movements. Both of them get imprisoned for non-cooperation. After release, *Vasunthara* returns with the hope of marrying *Srikanthan* and starting a new life. To her great shock and disappointment, she learns that he is getting married to a thirteen year-old girl and that the marriage is taking place on that very same day of her return, at Pondicherry, where the Sarada Act is not in force.

The title *Srikanthan Punarjenmam* meaning 'the re-birth of *Srikanthan*' is no doubt sarcastic. We understand



that the author laughs at the short life of his infatuation for *Vasunthara*, which is mistook for matured manly affection by the poor, loving soul. Kalki shows, to what extent the hero could lower himself - from the state of a chivalrous lover fighting for the freedom of his nation, hand in hand with his inspiring patriotic and enthusiastic lady-love, to a citizen who tries to cheat the law by finding the loopholes in it.

But, in a story that provides the grounds for beautifully bringing out the weakness of human mind that poses its best when watched but loses its integrity at the very first chance and temptation, it has not been overtly explained anywhere in the story, as to why *Srikanthan* lost his interest in *Vasunthara* and changed his mind. It comes as a surprise and shock, not only to the heroine but also to the readers who are left to wonder at the sudden change in the main character. We realise from Kalki's covert delineation of the main character that Time is a powerful transformer of ideas and that human mind is bound to change its views and desires in course of time. The hero has succumbed to the authority and desire of society and his parents, once he is out of the grip of *Vasunthara's* inspiring and encouraging presence. Suggestibility, a valuable asset that is mostly lacking in the expression of themes in Kalki's stories is admirably handled by him in character delineation,

#### 4.6. Appreciation of Kalki's Characterisation

The matter of learning to create characters so that they may seem actual flesh - and blood people to the readers, is of supreme importance to the writer. The main reason behind Kalki's success in this aspect is his providing proper motivation for the actions of his characters. His characters respond characteristically to stimuli to whatever happens to them. The actions of his characters seem quite natural and becoming to their temperament as portrayed by Kalki, and, once

the motivation has been established, the story runs unhaltingly with great immediacy and spontaneity.

4 6.1. *Natural life-like Characters* : Having depicted as innocent and simple a soul as *Krishnan*, Kalki spots out in him the general tendency of human being to react to a particular situation, according to their then - prevalent moods. *Krishnan's* action and words of endearment expressed towards the bullock that has caused him so much trouble as to arouse his anger, just because he was in a joyful mood after his meeting with *Poongodi* in the forest, proves this. (*Mayilai Kalai*)

Another admirable quality in Kalki's choice of his characters is, his careful avoidance of the 'too good' and the 'too bad'. Every man is an admixture of various traits of characters - some good and some bad. He is a creature of his environment and his glands. Science has discovered that man's behaviour has much to do with the number of vitamins in his system and the financial circumstances of his everyday life. Given a few hundred rupees more a month, he may be an entirely different person. In fact, man is so unpredictable that he may react differently to the same set of circumstances on different days in different moods. Also, from the writings of *Freud* and *Joyce*, we know that the so - called 'good' men may have startlingly 'evil' propensities, kept concealed, well - sealed by his lips and outward reactions; people superficially belonging to the heroes may be, in actuality, the most villainous in their lives.

True to life, Kalki has portrayed his characters as, a realistic mixture of good and bad elements. No particular villain endowed with all the vices in the world could be seen in his stories; nor could anyone come across the unbelievably good-natured souls. In other words, his charac-

ters are not the epic heroes. On the other hand, Kalki's heroes do have some defects, and his villains do possess a few good qualities.

*Chandrakasan*, addicted to alcohol in *Arasur Panchayat*; the pathetic clown in *Vidooshakan Chianamudali* whose entire life is wasted on acting as buffoon on a stage; *Kandasamy* in *Police Virunthu* who earns his living through illegal means; the *Thalaiyari* in *Governor Vandi* who encourages *Muthu* to drink a little in order to keep himself warm and turns into an active preacher and follower of prohibition, on seeing the consequences of his encouragement - *Muthu's falling* before the train due to the after-effects of his newly tried drink, arrack;- all these people are undeniable proofs of Kalki's choice of real, life-like characters endowed with goodness as well as weaknesses, natural to human beings.

The success of his stories lies not only in his choice of characters but also in his capacity to portray them vividly. The greatness of *Kamban*<sup>1</sup> is seen in his talent of making his readers admire both *Rama*<sup>2</sup> and *Ravana*<sup>3</sup>; of making them understand both *Kumbakarna*<sup>4</sup> and *Vibeeshana*<sup>5</sup>; in arousing sympathy for both *Vali*<sup>6</sup> and *Sukreevan*<sup>7</sup>; in portraying with equal clarity and impressiveness, the characters of both *Kaikeyi*<sup>8</sup> and *Kosalai*<sup>9</sup>; in presenting equally convincing arguments from the lips of both *Rama* and *Vali*, after *Rama's* killing him from behind a tree; in arousing our pity for both *Rama* and *Sita*<sup>10</sup> — the inflictor and the sufferer - for their predicament after their much-coveted-and-long-awaited-for reunion that existed but for a short time—in short; in

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1. கம்பன் 2. ராமா 3. ராவணா 4. கும்பகருணன் 5. விபீஷணன்  
6. வாலி 7. சுகிரீவன் 8. கைகேயி 9. கோசலை 10. சீதா

his talent for portraying with equal ease and conviction, characters of both kinds; and in arousing our admiration and sympathy for both.

4. 6. 2. *Knowledge of human nature*: We understand from his portrayal of characters that he has a deep and sound knowledge of human psychology-the workings of normal as well as abnormal and eccentric minds - which has resulted in his real, minute, detailed and convincing characterisation.

*Thavul Kandappa Pillai*<sup>1</sup>, while relating the story of *Tiruvallunthur Sivakkolunthu*, comments: "It was partly funny and partly agonising for me, to witness all these happenings. But I did not venture into advising them on any account. I have known from my experience that rendering advise on such occasions, would be of no use. That was why I did not say anything even while *Sivakkolunthu* was entangled in the meshes of love. They have to learn from their own experience, in such things. Pain or pleasure - they have to endure and know. Our interference would only increase their infatuation." <sup>2</sup>

What an understanding of adolescent psychology is essential to have written this speech and to have portrayed a character who could speak thus?

In the story entitled '*Orrai Roja*', we meet the hero even in the very beginning of the story in a critical moment in his life when he has decided to commit suicide. People who commit suicide are often termed cowards. But, on the contrary, the opposite is true, as far as they are concerned. Ordinarily one does not realise how much courage is needed to really do it, to take the last and drastic step, to over-

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1. தவுல் கந்தப்பிள்ளை. 2. திருவழுந்தூர் சிவக்கொழுந்து, பக். 28.



come the last moment's weakening of mind. Man's mind is indeed clever and cunning to place all sorts of arguments before him in order to justify the need for living. Kalki has beautifully pictured this moment.

'I could not carry out my decision for two reasons. First of all, it was a deadly frightening sight to look at the falls. Three waterfalls were falling down from the height of a coconut tree into an unfathomable pool formed below. To think that my body would be tossed in the current of this water, was awfully disheartening. From the day of birth from my mother's womb, how much pains were taken to bring me up? How much oil and soap, how many kinds of dresses and food. -oh! how much was spent on photography alone? I could not even dream of drowning this body in the whirling water. Hence, I gave up the idea.<sup>1</sup>

In the story *Thappili Cup*,<sup>3</sup> the weakness of human nature is wonderfully portrayed with great suggestion. Two race-goers resolve to earn back their money lost over horses, through staging a drama written, directed, acted and produced by them. They succeed in their attempt and decide to start a clean living. They part, only to meet each other within a week's time in the next racing field; Without uttering a single word, Kalki has achieved his purpose of implanting in the readers' minds, the impossibility of giving up the habit of betting over horses, once one gets into it. The high attraction that the horse-race has for human minds; the fact that losing in gambling only encourages the race-goer to plunge in more deeply; the difficulty in getting over this habit—all these are explained, not in words but through characterisation, which is very natural. Don't we meet similar characters in our daily life? If not in race-going they are in the clutches of some other vices.

In *Deivanai* all the characters are very common, simple people. The heroine after whom the story is titled takes no active part in the development of conflict. Her father is an ordinary man who spoils his fortune, health and future - in a way, his daughter's fortune also - through his habit of drinking. *Omakutti*, the hero, is an equally ordinary person who is very practical and highly calculative. His hesitation in accepting the hands of *Deivanai*, for whose sake he tried to come up in life, is quite natural and real. Any sensible man would stop and think twice before stepping into a house where he has to shoulder the responsibility of providing a living for his lady-love's widowed step-mother and a child. His disgust on seeing his object of adoration fallen in the pit of alcoholism is also equally natural. Thus, with such simple characters Kalki has spun a good story and the reason behind the success is, obviously, good characterisation - the result of Kalki's knowledge of human minds.

In *Orrai Raja*, we see that the hero resents the presence of another man in his compartment, especially when he is expecting an attractive young girl to board the train in the very same compartment, at the next station. Quite naturally he gets irritated where any normal person would have been only interested. It is revealed in his punching remark: "Still I don't understand", in a caustic tone, when the other person mentions about the single rose on the hair-do of *Manohari*. It is also quite natural for a lover to pose outwardly as though he is thoroughly disinterested in the other person, when within he is bubbling with curiosity to know all about her. This hypocrisy of a budding young loving mind is brought out in the hero's words, "Neither I know about her, nor do I want to", when the other person enquires whether he knows the details about *Manohari*.

The trinities of Virtue - Truth — Kindness and Beauty are the underlying basic qualities of the human mind. They are there within everyone, only suppressed or temporarily covered by circumstantial and environmental soot and smoke. It is rather man's ego that is mainly responsible for the burial of this live wire which lies tickling in the obscure sub-conscious mind, only to be excavated by the hands of occasion that demands quick action through love and affection. Even stern minds melt before the warmth of innocent childhood: even years of rivalry cease before the springs of love and chivalry. Only it needs the passage of time to ensure forgetfulness and forgiveness and an occasion strong enough to raise the curtain and reveal the inner self. This human tendency is the axis of the story *Onpathu Kuli Nilam*, in which we find *Srinivasam Pillai*<sup>1</sup> jumping into water to save his rival's daughter, *Neelambigai*.<sup>2</sup> He hesitates for a moment when a thought of devilry enters in his heart, but soon he decides to choose a humane path within a second's time. It is natural for a mind like that of *Srinivasam Pillai* which has for long suffered from the pangs of jealousy and rivalry to hesitate before plunging into action to save his enemy's daughter. The hesitation is human; the decision is virtuous; and it is good characterisation that lends the moment of action its vitality.

4.6.3. *Presence of only the necessary Characters*: The absence of unwanted, insignificant and irrelevant characters in Kalki's stories is also to be appreciated. Only the necessary characters are introduced; no insertion of unwanted elements could be found in his stories. Certain minor characters are simply included in the speech of the main characters, or, are made to appear along with them as mere listeners, in order to make the story appear natural and convincing. Apart from that necessity, they are not made to utter even a single word.

*Vasthathu Venu* is an excellent example where Kalki has introduced just five characters - who are absolutely essential. Though there is a mention of *Veerasamy's* children in the beginning of the story, their presence is mentioned only to create an atmosphere in the story, and they do not play any role in effecting the forward movement of the plot. We could not but appreciate Kalki's limitation over the number of characters and their parts in the story.

*Venu* and *Veerasamy* are the main characters and their wives also play significant roles. But the part played by *Venu's* wife *Mangammal* is much more than that of *Veerasamy's* wife. Nevertheless, her silent participation in the affair between the neighbours; and her few words on just two occasions, do what is important for the story. Kalki is good in deciding how much of a character should be presented, and how much to be implied. *Mangammal's* brother appears in the story just in time and just for the time.

4.6.4 *Variety in the Choice of Characters*: As already mentioned with reference to the general pattern in Kalki's choice of characters, his characters belong to as many castes, occupations and social levels as possible.

We find landlords in *Onpathu Kuli Nilam*, artists talented in music, Veena, Nagaswaram and acting, in *Veenai Bavani Natakakkari* and *Thiruvallunthur Sivakkolunthu*; a rogue in *Vasthathu Venu*; an unemployed rowing man in *Police Virunthu*, people of village in *Mayilaiikkalai*, *Arasur Panchayat*, *Chandramathi* and *Kanthimathiyin Kathalan*, chivalrous fighters in *Madatthevan Sunai*, and *Thanthaiyum Makanum*, dacoits in *Katharakkallan*, social reformers in *Kamalavin Kulyanam* and *Subathirayin Sakotharan*, political non-co-operators in *Srikanthan Punarjenmam*; and educated women engaged in planning for their betterment and upliftment in *Kadithamum Kanneerum* and *Kanaiyalayin Kanavu*.



4.6.5 *Interesting Characters* : The successful story, novel, stage-plays, movie etc., whether designed to entertain an adult or young audience, are art forms in which people react characteristically to situations. The key-note of Kalki's successful characterisation is that he endows his characters with interesting traits. In novels as well as in his short stories, he has the unique knack of presenting absorbing characters in whose destiny the readers feel involved.

A talented artist who neglects her art for her lover's sake; a wealthy Mirasudar, already married and having children, falling in love with the beautiful artist and living with her; the silently suffering wife whose pent-up feelings burst on hearing about the accident in which her husband is involved; a friend who is a go-between for both the families - all these characters in *Veenai Bavani* arouse our sympathy and interest.

In *Vasthathu Venu*, all the three main characters are different and interesting, each in his or her own way. *Veerasamy*, the policeman is an average character. He is neither a coward nor a pusher; he neither gets too much involved in things nor does he stand aloof watching the discomforts of others; he neither makes use of his position to harm others nor abuses it by being indifferent to his job. He has the manly patience which gives him dignity. Also, he is intelligent enough to understand the motives of the other and to handle him accordingly. His dealings with *Venu* are subtle enough to offend his neighbour but at the same time he does not become a trespasser of Law which he is supposed to guard. He is clever, cunning, honest and courageous. His strength is not in his physique but in his mind and spirit, as the story's plot reveals. He is a eye-for-an-eye type who answers every movement made by *Venu*. He has a sense of

humour which gets revealed in all his dealings with *Venu*. We could picture him laughing silently at *Venu's* unending efforts to cause him trouble.

*Venu*, the other man in this dual between personalities, is a drunkard, a thief and a scoundrel who would go to any extent in order to get rid of a man whom he dislikes for no valid reason at all. He is very small-minded, and he finds pleasure in teasing his neighbour. He has a plotting mind and is capable of making cold-blooded assaults. But he is not very clever or cunning. His sole strength lies in his physique.

No wonder *Mangammal* does not love him. It is not love that binds her to her husband but mere convention that a married woman should stay with her husband better or worse. She is not the type to accept her partner as he is and love him for what he is. She has her own grievances against him and his behaviour. But she is afraid of him—terribly afraid. She refrains from uttering even a single word against him, only because she is afraid of the consequences. She has no respect for him, too. All these facts come out, when her husband gives her, her life's chance to speak out her mind. She gives vent to her pent-up feelings—all the harsh sentiments against him. This incident throws light not only on her character but on the entire relationship that exists between husband and wife.

This is but a single example of Kalki's presentation of real, natural, typical, convincing characters whose actions he makes the readers follow with interest.

4.6 6. *Unforgettable minor characters*: The admirable quality in Kalki's characterisation is the fact that he has portrayed even minor characters well and true to life, as a result of which, even they stay in our thoughts.

The doctor who appears in *Veenai Bavani* is a typical specimen of "the social invertebrae" who succumb to the wishes of the white-collars, without caring for the dignity of their profession.

The car driver of *Iyengar in Theppidittha Kudicaikal* who saves his master from being compelled to help the poor by giving a 'truthful' reply on behalf of the wounded and moving the car away from the place of confusion before they are obliged to get involved in 'social service'; the bus driver in *Kamalavin Kalyanam* who contacts the enthusiasm of the 'social reformers' inside the bus, and happily drives fast in order to get in time to the place of marriage which they are hurrying to stop; the *chokraboy*, in *Tiruvallunthur Sivakkolunthu*; the 'obedient' *Kesavan in Pudu Overseer* who runs away at the right moment leaving his master in distress, to save himself; *Krishnan's* mother in *Mayilaiikkalai* who worries about her 'child' (only twenty years old!) if he fails to return home before dusk; the ladies in *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu* who, giving importance to social values and customs render even when unasked for, their 'valuable' criticism about Sakuntala, that she is 'old enough to have borne four children and yet is roaming about like a 'bullock'' *Iyempettai Kandappan* who occurs in all three stories - *Veenai Bavani*, *Natakakkari* and *Tiruvallunthur Sivakkolunthu* as the narrator of the stories;—all these are examples of unforgettable minor characters in Kalki's stories.

#### 4.7. Interdependence of plot and characterisation

As Henry James has remarked, after all, 'what is character but the determination, of the incident; and, what is incident but the illustration of character?' Definitely Kalki knows to interweave plot and character, effectively.

In *Police Virunthu*, *Kandasamy* tries to earn money by cheating the public. His action reveals his character; his

characterisation provides motivation and justification for his action 'In *Tiruvallunthur Sivakkolunthu* and *Veenai Bavani*', the characters bring ruin to their lives through their own mistakes and misunderstandings. In *Vasthatu Venu*, the plot of the story itself is a sort of characterisation. The conflict is between two personalities arising out of the differences in their character. Thus, in all his stories, the development of the respective plots are justified by characterisation; and characterisation is done, by revelation of character through the actions and the conflicts in the plot.

However, there are very few stories where characterisation has been spoilt by the development of the plot; and where the development of plot appears absurd through improper characterisation.

*Siranjeevikkathai* and *Karirulil Oru Minnal* are examples of the first. For the second, we have a handful of stories where Kalki, the master of characterisation in the field of short fiction, has unbelievably failed, by creating implausible characters or plotting unexplainable behaviour.

#### 4.8. Flaws in Kalki's characterisations : *Implausible*:

His creation of *U.P. Ragavachari* in *Rangoon Mappillai*, and *Sugumar* and *Malathi* in *Idintha Kottai*, are fantastic and highly improbable.

In *Orrai Raja*, the behaviour of the heroine appears queer on the ground of common sense and the existing social values. *Manohari*, having failed in examination, decides to commit suicide. In order to avoid embarrassment to her father, she comes to India carrying a diamond to be used for the purpose. In a letter written to her father she says that she is leaving Ceylon with her lover to get married in India.



A girl of so much courage and shrewdness, utterly devoid of the feminine shyness and coyness, deciding to put an end to her life for having failed in the examination, may not be so improbable, since it only reflects her sensitiveness. And sensitiveness is quite natural in such a girl, partly due to her age and position, and partly due to her mental make-up. But her coming to India just to put an end to her life, appears ridiculous.

Of course, nobody could predict how an individual would act in a particular circumstance in his personal life. The nervous strain, the already built-up tension, the previous history unknown to the world - all these have a share in people's coming to a decision and acting accordingly. But, if the author could justify the actions of his characters in terms of the character-traits which he has chosen to depict; and if he could convince the readers that it is possible for such person to act in a particular way under certain situations it would had been true to art.

In other words, Kalki has failed to build up proper motivation for her act. It is rather surprising (especially when compared to the pains that he has taken in order to explain the reason for the hero's presence in the train on that particular day and to establish a motivation for his change of mind), as to how he has been satisfied with such a meagre motivation for the act of the heroine which is the very beginning of the conflict, and upon which every other act - in fact, the entire story - hinges.

That her committing suicide would spoil the reputation of her father if done in Ceylon, is not a convincing reason. It seems ridiculous when one asks the question - would not the act of eloping with her lover to India, spoil the reputation of her father? In fact, self-immolation for the sake of satisfying one's ego would atleast seem justified in the eyes of the society. A daughter committing suicide for having

failed in the examination would not spoil the family's prestige and her father's reputation, as much as her eloping with her lover. The former would atleast bring sympathy; the latter would only cause embarrassment and utter-shame. One wonders how and why Kalki missed this point.

*Unexplained* : *S.S. Menaka*,<sup>1</sup> is a story that happens on a ship. The vessel is facing a crisis and everyone has lost hope. *Rajam*<sup>2</sup> alone stays normal. People around her look with suspicious eyes when she dresses herself as usual and spends the time joyfully talking with *John*, the Engineer of the ship. They gossip about her past in Singapore. One night *John* takes her in a life-boat under the pretext of helping her to commit suicide. But in fact he attempts to save both of their lives since he has seen a submarine coming to attack the ship. They watch the ship sinking gradually. We learn from their conversation that he had been a tenant residing in an apartment in the upstairs of the house where *Rajam* lived with her father who is a thoroughly irresponsible crook. Once her father stole money from *John's* trunk. *Rajam* tried to replace it. *John* who saw it, naturally misunderstood her. He left the place without her knowledge and disappears from her life without any explanation or excuse. They meet on the ship and everything is cleared after a heart-to-heart talk in the midsea.

It is quite natural for lovers to separate on account of suspicion caused by a trivial incident, which is exaggerated through the microscopic eye of suspicion. But, their behaviour at the time of their reunion is queer. There is no necessity for *Rajam* to turn into a subject of gossip in the ship. It is understood from the gossip that she had no good reputation even during her stay at Singapore. What justification is given for her acquiring a bad name in society, for suspected, misconduct? Even if one sets it aside as mere

gossip, yet what basis was there for the gossip? People might have misunderstood her, but what was the occasion or her behaviour that led to such misunderstanding? Kalki has not made it clear. Left without any explanation her character appears villainous and black.

Her behaviour on the ship, only adds to the mystery. Of course, a sense of neatness and women's inborn desire to appear pleasingly before others, would justify her action. We can also guess that her recognition of the real personality latent in the Engineer, *John*, made her act so. But the author does not care to even imply that. Moreover, theirs is not an age that craves for attraction and attention through physical appearances. Perfect understanding of the love they have for each other would suffice.

Even if both of these actions could be explained and justified in one way or the other, their, act of escaping, leaving others to get drowned, is unpardonable. Being the Engineer aboard the ship holding such a responsible job and having pre-knowledge of the disaster, what a ruthless person he must have been to escape with his lady-love? No sense of duty - lack of humanity and chivalry - no pity or regret even after seeing the ship drowning with all its crew and passengers-- all these qualities of *John*, the protagonist, are shocking and highly improbable.

In *Kamalavin Kalyanam*, an elderly advocate arranges for his second marriage with a small girl. The marriage is stopped by the efforts of *Sundaram Iyer*. The bride's family is however very intent upon this alliance and hence forces the bridegroom to marry her. The bride herself gives her consent for this marriage. The troubled *Ganapathi Sastri* asks for permission to have a talk with the girl and during their conversation learns to his surprise that she is only a foster-daughter of their parents. To his great shock, on further

questioning he learns, that she is his own daughter lost twelve or thirteen years back in *Kumbakonam*, amidst the crowd gathered there for the great *Mahamaham festival*.

This revelation is not only unnecessary but it also comes in an unusual way. Usually, in such cases, even before the identity of the lost person is known, the concerned persons get some unexplainable feeling of nearness - of being related to each other. The authors deliberately follow this convention, which is true to life and also helps to foreshadow the future incidents. Such foreshadowings are even essential as rewards for the readers' suspension of disbelief. Kalki has gone off this usual track and has disclosed the fact suddenly. This is in a way a breach of promise since there is an unsaid, tacit author-reader agreement wherein the reader promises to suspend his disbelief and the author promises to satisfy his curiosity as well as his craving for order. Suppressing evidence merely for surprising the readers is no valid reason for an author. Hence, it is not only surprising as to how and why the father has no feeling whatsoever on the several occasions prior to his last meeting, on seeing the girl: but also puzzling, as to what justification Kalki could give for not hinting it in any one of the several possible ways, especially when he is not a non-believer of such intuitions as it is clear from the story *S.S. Menaka* where the heroine remarks, "what if you have changed a lot? You could deceive my eyes not my mind. Could you?" and the hero also proudly announces of his premonition.

In *Kanthimathiyin Kathalan*, it is shocking to see the heroine, unusual to the ideal fictional character, not forgetting her past life and deciding to elope with her lover. We meet wavering hearts and unstable minds losing track of the traditional lines of thinking, in *Dr. Mu. Varadarasanar's* novels also. But there, the situation is entirely different. The author tries to look realistically at the problems of human mind and life.



Here, *Gandhimathi* has no reason whatsoever to be kindled afresh with the lost love on merely seeing her past lover, especially when the author has not cared to portray a deep love or understanding between them in the days of their courting when, in fact, they were not even sure of each other's intentions.

*Not Individualized* : It is only when a character is characterized as good or bad, admirable or despicable, that the reader cares for what happens to him or what he does. Otherwise, a character may be involved in a climax, or he may escape but the readers would remain indifferent. This is what happens in the case of the characters in *Chandramathi*.

The hero and heroine are outwardly such passive and inert characters that we are not fully aware of the importance of their presence in the story. Before the reader understands who the main character is and what the conflict of the story is, the story comes to an end perhaps surprising to the narrator and surely puzzling to the reader. *Chandramathi* fails to impress the readers in any other way except through her beauty which is but too flimsy an appeal to draw the whole attention of the readers. The author has not cared to characterize her as an individual.

In order to make effective characterization, it is not enough if an author presents convincing characters; he has to endow them also with a striking personality that would individualize them. There is a fine line between character and personality. One may so characterize his story-actor to make him come alive on the printed page and yet he may have failed to individualize him as a distinct personality.

The characters in *Chandramathi* have neither typical traits nor a personality of their own. In the end, when

*Chandramathi* disappoints everyone and marries the least expected spouse and also secretly leaves India with him, we understand that they have been working in an underhand manner. But this is not even implied or foreshadowed; nor is it justified by proper characterisation. Hence, the story remains a puzzle and the events fail to arouse our interest.

Pointing out these flaws in Kalki's characterization which breaks the basic rules of plausibility in fiction and thereby spoils to some extent the necessary illusion of reality, does not mean that the author's freedom in introducing new characters with fresh thoughts should be restricted. No one can deny an author's innate right for expressing his own views from his own angle through his own experience or imagination or by his own way of characterization; only he should justify the actions of his characters by providing proper motivation. Kalki is blamed, not for presenting unusual characters but only for leaving their attitudes unexplained, and questionable on the grounds of plausibility in fiction.

"The pattern of life is too vast for human comprehension. We see causes without visible effects and effects without visible causes. Life stretches into infinity on either side of us. Our past.... our vision of the future is no farther away than our next breath, and not always that far. Life does not satisfy the craving for pattern, for logical arrangement that is inherent in our every fibre. Only in the art of the writer can we find satisfaction for this fundamental craving of the human heart for orderly events, for a comprehensible sequence of cause and effect, for unity in character, and for a series of related happenings increasing in dramatic intensity to a climax and a conclusion."

#### 4.9. Language of Characters

Since the chapter on Kalki's language and style deals elaborately with this aspect, it would suffice to briefly men-

tion here in general, that Kalki has chosen to write in a 'familiar style' of the standard dialect in Tamil Nadu. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning here that he has not taken the trouble of handling the regional dialects even though his characters belong to a wide range of castes and places. One could divide the language of his characters into two main categories - Brahmin and non-Brahmin dialects, and there stops the variations he makes in the utterances of his characters.

We can distinguish clearly the Tirunelveli Pillaimar dialect in some of *Pudumaippithan's* stories; the Tanjore Brahmin dialect in *T. Janakiraman's* stories; the Nagercoil dialect in *Neela Padmanaban's* stories; the Madras dialect in *Vinthan's* stories; a cosmopolitan society's manipravala language in the stories of *Jeyakanthan*, *Asokamithran* and *Indra Parthasarathi*. The intention behind the citation of these examples is to point out that some authors take care of the language of their characters to such an extent as to preserve the exact dialect of the characters', respective castes and places. But Kalki has not been precise in the use of regional dialectal variations in the language of his characters.

He uses Brahmin dialect when Brahmins appear in his stories; He uses invariably a standard non-Brahmin dialect when he portrays non-Brahmins. There ends the difference. Even when he chooses a loafer as the main character, he does not use any special dialect (as it could be seen in *Vastathu Venu*,) and he has not changed in the case of characters who lived centuries ago, (as in the case of 'Mayil Vili Man',.)

On the one hand it is not appropriate to use such a general dialect for all people irrespective of the normally present variations in their respective languages. On the other hand, the other way round is equally a drawback from another angle, since regional dialects are at times difficult

for the reading public to understand. If it is also essential for the creation of illusion of reality in the story, to use the appropriate dialects of the characters, it is also essential from the point of view of puritanic scholars, to safeguard the standard of language in Literature. The view of the student is, that in order to avoid controversy and confusion, it is better to use the language that authors such as *Kalki*, and *Mu.Va.*, use since it would be understood by the mass and not objected to by the scholars.



## Chapter 5

# *Language And Style*

### 5.1. The language of fiction

Language in the field of fiction, is merely the form of expression - the means to achieve the end. Therefore, its importance lies only as a means, and to stress upon or evaluate it from any angle other than that of a means to achieve an end - would be giving undue importance to it.

The criteria to be considered in the selection and evaluation of language and style in fiction are, the appropriateness of the choice and the achievement of the desired effect through it. In other words, giving the writer the liberty to choose the language and style, a critic has to see only whether the author has chosen the proper dress for the material and whether it is fitting and adorning. That is all and nothing more.

The problem of the use of slang in fiction and the cry of the scholars over it on the ground that it spoils the purity of the language, is not an ultra modern issue; nor is it an issue only of Tamilnad. It had been there for centuries, and in other countries too.

*Kempton* enlightens us in this issue by tracing the history of language in English Fiction. He says that, "it was *Mark Twain* and *Bret Harte* who prepared the way for this final touch by getting close to spoken language. Hampered by Victorian rhetoric and typographical traditions, of which this rough young country was inordinately conscious, their efforts had always to be priggishly surrounded by quotation marks (for slang) as evidence to the cultural reader that the author knew better,"<sup>1</sup> He remarks that the authors wrote carefully including suspect phrases in quotation marks as if in apology.

Thus we find that the use of slang is not a recently introduced modern trend in short story, but it had been there even before two centuries. Only the writers' attitude has changed. Instead of marking and viewing them separately they have become used to accepting them in the flow of language quite naturally.

### 5.2. Kalki's view on fictional style

It may be surprising to the readers of *Kalki* used to his *maniprāvala* style, to learn of his views about the medium of education. He remarks, "Gandhi is a great Mahatma, no doubt. But still, he is a Gujarathi whose mother tongue is not Tamil. Hence, his preachings cannot easily impress us. On the contrary, Rajaji is our own statesman; capable of speaking convincingly in our own mother tongue."<sup>2</sup> This observation is an undeniable proof of his notion that ideas could be clearly expressed and grasped only through one's own mother tongue. However, for the very same reason, he objects to scholars strictly adhering to grammar and writing a language that is, if not incomprehensible, atleast a bit above the normal standard of understanding of laymen.

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1. The short story, p. 133.

2. Preface to the Collection 'Bankar Vinayaka Rao'

Hence he writes, commenting upon the speech of some of his fellowmen when he was at *Tiruchengodu Gandhi Ashram*, "One could atleast follow the renaissance Tamil writers' language. But, even *Lord Siva* and *Saint Agasthiya* could not understand *Sivagurunathan's*<sup>1</sup> language ... .. At first their speech was not at all comprehensible to me. *Ramadurai's*<sup>2</sup> utterances were still more incomprehensible. To put it in a nut-shell: their speech was as clear to me as the style of the commentators such as *Parimelalagar*<sup>3</sup> and *Naccinarkkiniyar*<sup>4</sup>; and the prose of puritanic Tamil scholars of today. In fact, it was fit to be prescribed as text for vidwan examination."

This observation, together with the views he has expressed in his review of *Vinthan's*<sup>5</sup> short stories, make clear *Kalki's* idea of fictional style.

He is of the firm opinion that writers should write a natural and original 'familiar style' comprehensible to readers of all kinds, for the simple and obvious reason that the purpose of any kind of writing is communication which should not be sacrificed for the sake of style. A florid style written at the cost of clarity and communication, loses its value and purpose.

As already stated, *Kalki* has always proved to be a person who sincerely practised what he seriously preached. As a result, his language is very clear and communicative to the great pleasure of his readers, the satisfaction of the critics and the appreciation of his contemporary writers.<sup>6</sup>

1. சிவகுருநாதன் 2. ராமதுரை

3. பரிமேலழகர் 4. நச்சினூர்க் கினியர்

5. விந்தன்

6. கல்கி பாரதியிடமிருந்து கிண்டல், கேலி, நகைச்சுவை, தெளிவு, நளினம், கலகலப்பு ஆகியவற்றை எடுத்துக் கொண்டார். அரசியல் சமூகம், கலைகள் எதைப்பற்றி எழுதினாலும் கல்கியின் எழுத்தில் இந்த இன்பங்கள் நிறைந்து ததும்புவதைக் காணலாம்— பி. எஸ். ராமையா, தீபம், சூன் 1969 பக். 66—67.

### 5.3. Kalki's style : A general view

A full consideration of style must involve a generalisation of the writer's manner. In this context, what *Eastman* gives as the basis for analysis of style in novels, is appropriate for fiction in general, including short story. He says that from a page-by-page exposure to the language of a given work, the reader would become aware of what may be called the narrator's degree of presence.<sup>1</sup>

5.3.1. *Objective presentation* : The writing may seem so objective that the narrator's presence is barely felt : he remains an impersonal observer. Kalki has written a number of stories in the third person narrative medium—from the non-participant, point of view—*Governor Vijayam*, *Cinimakkathai*, *Engal Ur Sangeethappottai*, *Arasur Panchayat*, *Governor Vandi*, *Chinnathambiyum Thirudarkalum*, *Vidooshakan Chinnamudali*, *Ithu Enna Sorakkam*, *Tharkolai* and a few other stories are examples for Kalki's objective presentation of the events of the story. It is a pleasure to read them wherein no intrusion of the author occurs by way of comments upon character, situation and theme; aside speeches or unnecessary explanations. The stories are themselves the proof for Kalki's talent and it could neither be explained nor illustrated in any other way.

5.3.2. *Participant - presentation* : The author, in this way of writing, joins the reader as flesh-and-blood companion who vivaciously reacts to his own story.

In *Orrai Roja*,<sup>2</sup> the writer remarks, "Once I went to *Papanasam*; you may perhaps laugh if you knew the reason. Some may pity me."

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1. *Critical Approaches To Fiction*, p. 150.

2. ஒற்றை ரோஜா, பக். 1.



In *Mayilaikkalai*, he asks for the readers' opinion upon *Krishnan's* behaviour. "What do you think is the reason for his losing the bullock yesterday and going in search of it today? My opinion is that his age is the reason behind it. Perhaps you may not agree with me. You may say that his brooding over *Poongodi* instead of grazing the cattle is the reason. That is true. But what I say is that it is his age that is behind that also."<sup>1</sup>

5.3.3. *Spectator-Presentation* : In between the dispassionate recorder and the engaged participant, another narrator may pose as a detached spectator drily commenting to the reader as from the next seat in a bus or a theatre. Usually the undertones are placed in brackets.

In *Mayilaikkalai*, the author comments from within brackets, "Oh! *Krishna Konar*, how can loss turn into gain sir? It seems you will utter nonsense in your confusion."<sup>2</sup>

Thus we find that Kalki's stories consist of examples of all the three types of style possible in fiction. Usually, only one type is followed by each author. However, a versatile writer, Kalki has used all the three. One is not able to find any justification or motivation for his choice, i.e., he has not chosen them in order to suit the characters or situations of the stories. Any particular type of story or telling medium is not the basis for the choice. All the three types are found in all types of stories and irrespective of the story's point of view. For instance, objective presentation is found in both *Governor Vijayam* and *Engul Ur Sangeethapottli* - the former narrated from non-participant point of view and the latter from participant point of view. Participant presentation is found in both *Rangadurkkam Raja* and *Tiruvallundur Sivakkolunthu* - the former narrated in third person and the latter narrated in first person. The third type is comparatively rare in Kalki's stories, and occurs mostly in omniscient point of view stories.

It would not be a digression to refer to the fact in this context that though Kalki has used the participant presentation style to a lesser extent in his short stories, yet, if one views all his creations together—short stories and also novels—it is clear that objective presentation is not the style of this author. Whether by accident or by design, he has chosen to present many of his short stories in the objective presentation style which is very appropriate and to be appreciated.

Based on these analyses, one could make the following statements regarding Kalki's style.

Generally, Kalki writes with the reader in mind before him. Hence, his style resembles typically that of an oral anecdote.

In most of his short fiction he has chosen to present the matter objectively and has succeeded in creating immediacy, spontaneity and an illusion of reality.

Regarding his participation in the stories' events as a running commentator, it is discussed elsewhere.

#### 5. 4. Analysis of style : Factors for consideration

An analysis of the technicalities of language and style naturally starts with diction since words are the building materials of style and the much desired harmony of precision results mainly through appropriate diction.

Making a few broad classifications but taking care of even minute details and variations, *Eastman* observes that there are what are called,

general words and specific words  
concrete diction and abstract diction  
formal diction and informal diction, and  
literal words and figurative words.<sup>1</sup>

Learning the types of diction appropriate for fiction, and their application and usage in the art, would help a critic while analysing a short story, to point out where the style of the author has contributed to the effect of the story by revealing character; by effecting transitions of time, and helping for the forward movement of the plot unobtrusively; creating an atmosphere congenial to the proper understanding and appraisal of the theme; and in totality, to produce the unity of effect. He can also show where the style has failed the author, retarded the movement of the story and has resulted in spoiling the illusion of reality.

*5.4.1. General and specific diction :* General diction is used to summarise, abstract or abridge. On the contrary the author of short fiction who implicitly wishes to 'make, present' a scene - who wants to set the stage for the story by creating the appropriate atmosphere through lively description, - uses specific words that particularize everything present. Kalki is very specific in his descriptions of setting and atmosphere, or characters.

“ ஐப்பசி மாதத்து அடைமழை ; ....இரயில்பாதையின் இரு புறமும் அநேகமாக ஐம்பது கஜத்துக்கு ஒருவர் வீதம் மனிதர்கள் நிற்கிறார்கள் . . . . அவர்கள் கையில் பிடித்துக் கொண்டிருக்கும் லாந்தர்கள் அவை . . . . அப்படி நின்று கொண்டிருப்பவர்களில் நமது தலையாரி முத்துவும் ஒருவன். ஒரு கையில் லாந்தரும், மற்றொரு கையில் தடியும் பிடித்துக் கொண்டிருக்கிறான். வாடைக் காற்று 'விரி' என்று அடிப்பதால் அவன் உடம்பு குளிரினால் 'வெட வெட'வென்று நடுங்குகிறது. பல்லுக் கிட்டுகிறது. மேலே மழைக்கு ஒரு கோணிப்பை. மழை கோணிப்பைக்குள் நுழைந்து முதுகுக்கு வந்து வெகு நேரமாயிற்று. உடுத்திய வேட்டியைப் பற்றிச் சொல்ல வேண்டியதில்லை.”<sup>1</sup>

In the above quoted example we find that the author takes great pains to describe the setting, situation or action in specific words. Actions or places that could have easily been described in a few sentences are explained in a paragraph, registering even minute details.

Merely mentioning of the fact that people were waiting for the arrival of the special train that would be carrying the Governor would have sufficed - had it been an essay. Appropriate to the fictional style, the author has described the characters, setting and atmosphere in words that bring the picture of a cold November night, dark and raining. The pouring shower and the people who shiver, stay in our minds through the effect of the specific diction of Kalki.

5.4.2. *Concrete and abstract diction*: Concrete diction does the same job as specific diction in its particularity of reference but only it is more restricted to details of senses. It invites, Eastman writes, "the reader, not only to believe the scene, but to partake of it as if physically there".<sup>1</sup> The description of the 'sounding cataract' and the sky-high trees' are examples of concrete diction that is employed in short fiction.

In *Idintha Kottai*, the narrator visits the Cenji Fort alone for a second time on an evening. His friends, as per his instructions, leave him there and move away promising to return in an hour after a small tea. All his desire to enjoy the beauty of the historical ruins of the fort leaves him, once he is alone in that god-foresaken place. Kalki describes the situation thus:

“வண்டி போயிற்றோ இல்லையோ, அந்த ஏகாந்தப் பிரதேசத்தில் நிசப்தம் குடி கொண்டது. என்னுடைய கால் செருப்பின் சப்தத்தைக் கேட்டு நானே திடுக்கிட்டேன். அந்தி நேரத்தில் அந்த நிர்மானுஷ்யமான பிரதேசத்துக்குள் தன்னந்தனியாகச் சென்றபோது மனத்தில் ஒருவிதக் கலக்கமும் பரபரப்பும் உண்டாயின.



“பேற்குத் திசையிலிருந்த குன்றுகளுக்குப் பின்னால் சூரியன் திடீரென்று மறைந்தது. வெகு சீக்கிரத்தில் கையெழுத்து மறையும் நேரம் வந்து விட்டது .... இருளடைந்த பாரும் மண்டபங்களிலிருந்து வெளவால்கள் ‘இறக்கையை’ அடித்துக் கொள்ளுகிற சத்தம் கேட்டது ..... நல்ல வேளையாக, அன்று பெளர்ணமியாதலால், கிழக்கே பூரண சந்திரன் உதயமாகிக் கொண்டிருந்தான்.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus we find the author using the appropriate concrete diction to portray sensory impressions. Actually his language consists of not mere words but word-pictures that bring before our mental eye, the figure and appearance of the object, person or setting described by the author.

*5.4.3 Formal and informal diction :* Diction may also be described by its formality or its informality as it draws on the special vocabularies and usages of relaxed conversation, slang, dialect or on the other hand, of serious public communication. Formal diction can further be classified into sub-categories such as technical terms, foreign words, allusive quotations, learned tongue from books and verses that exhibits the author's knowledge, etc.

*Hoffman's* view about formal diction is worth mentioning here since he has listed as ‘small distractions’, unusual words, foreign words; classical, historical and fictional references and unusual proper names.<sup>2</sup>

It is true to certain extent that these in a way distract the reader's attention since they are capable of focussing his attention more on language and style than on the plot, theme and characters of the story. However, mixed in apt proportion and placed at the right place with a view to making the ideas clear, these so called ‘distractions’ would only enhance the beauty of the author's language and style and would also effect clarity of expression.

1. மயிலைக்காளை. பக். 63.

2. *Kempton*, p. 67.

Kalki's diction, in the sense explained above, is partly formal and partly informal — he uses them at the right places for the right purposes.

*Dialectal Variations* : As already discussed in the chapter on *Characters and Characterisation* under the sub-heading *Language of Characters*, we could differentiate only two types of dialects, namely Brahmin and non-Brahmin. Typical Brahminical expressions such as

“அத்தான் உன்னைத் துன்புறுத்துகிருனா?”<sup>1</sup>

“லக்ஷ்மி அடுப்புள்ளேயே இருக்கிருளா என்ன?”<sup>2</sup>

“நாசமாய்ப் போனயள்.”<sup>3</sup>

occur quite naturally in his stories.

*Literary Splendour* : Though an advocate and practitioner of the ‘familiar style’, Kalki has chosen to reveal his literary knowledge and skill in certain contexts of his stories.

He writes a pedantic style full of high-sounding terms, occasionally taken from the great poets, especially when describing how characters appear to him.

“அவர்களில், சாரதை பத்தரை மாற்றுப் பொன்னெத்த மேனியினாள். விசாலமான நெற்றியும் அறிவு ஊறித் ததும்பும் கண்களும் படைத்தவள். அவள் கண்களினுள்ளே இருந்த கரு விழிகளோ. அங்குமிங்கும் குறுகுறுவென்று அலைந்து கொண்டிருந்தன. தன் கடைக்கண் வீச்சாகிய ஒரே ஆயுதத்தின் துணை கொண்டு ஆடவரையும் பெண்டிரையும் அடக்கியாளும் திறனுடையவள் அவள் என்பது, அவ்விழிகளை ஒருமுறை பார்த்த அளவினாலே விளங்கும். அப்போதலர்ந்த ரோஜா மலரின் இதழையொத்த தன்

1. சாரதையின் தந்திரம் பக்.7

2. மேற்படி, பக் 29

3 கணையாழியின் கனவு, பக்.86

அதரங்களில் புன்னகையிருக்க, வேறு பொன், கல் நகைகள் எதற்கு என்று கருதியே போலும், அவள் அதிக ஆபரணங்கள் அணிந்து கொள்ளவில்லை....இப்பொன்னெத்த வண்ணமுடையாளினின்றும் பல வகையிலும் மாறுபட்டிருந்தாள் லட்சுமி. அவள் மாநிற மேனியினள். திருத்தமாக அமைந்திருந்த அவள் திருமுக மண்டலம், இதுகாலை சோகத்தினால் வாட்டமுற்றிருந்ததாயினும், அழகும் அமைதியுமே அதன் இயற்கை அணிகள் என்பது நன்கு விளங்கிற்று. அவள் கண்ணில் அளவிடப்படாத தூய உண்மைக்காதல் பொங்கித் ததும்பிக் கொண்டிருந்தது.<sup>1</sup>”

“நீல மேகங்களின் வரம்புகள் ஒரு நிமிஷம் பொன் வண்ணம் பெற்றுத் திகழ்ந்தன. அடுத்த நிமிஷம் நீல மேகங்கள் செந்தாமரை நிறமாக மாறின.<sup>2</sup>”

*Quotations :* Kalki has liberally quoted eminent writers of his period and of ancient days. What is more, he has quoted not only verses but also parts of a novel; folk songs; grammatical Sutras<sup>3</sup> and other such materials. He has also quoted Tamil and Sanskrit proverbs.

*Poetry :* “இன்பக் கனவிலே—சகியே

இன்னிசை பாடி வந்தான் -எவனோ

இன்னிசை பாடி வந்தான்.”

“மானின் விழி பெற்று மயில் வந்ததென வந்தான்.”

—“மயில் விழி மான்”

“வருவாய் மயில்மீ தனிலே

வடிவே லுடனே வருவாய்”

“கற்றுணைப் பூட்டியோர் கடலிற் பாய்ச்சிலும்

நற்றுணை யாவது நமச்சி வாயவே”

—“நாடகக்காரி”

1 சாரதையின் தந்திரம் பக். 5.

2. மயில் விழி மான், பக். 20.

3. சூத்திரங்கள்

இராஜ விசுவாச லாலா லஜபதியே”

—‘கணையாழியின் கனவு’

“கரியவாகிப் புடைபரந்து மிளிர்ந்து  
செவ்வரி யோடி நீண்டவப்  
பெரிய வாயகண் களென்னைப்  
பேதமை செய்தனவே”

—‘வைர மோதிரம்’

“நிலவு செய்யு முகமும் -காண்பார்  
நினைவு அழிக்கும் விழியும்  
கலக லென்ற மொழியும் - தெய்வக்  
கவிதுலங்கு நகையும்”

—‘வைர மோதிரம்’

“வந்தே மாதரம் என்றுயிர் போம்வரை  
வாழ்த்துவோம் முடிதாழ்த்து வோம்”

“கத்தி யின்றி ரத்தமின்றி  
யுத்த மொன்று வருகுது!”

—‘பவானி, பி, ஏ., பி.எஸ்’

“பச்சைக் குழந்தையடி - கண்ணில்  
பாவையடி சந்திரமதி”

“நீலக் கடலினிலே - நின்  
நீண்ட குழல் தோன்றுதடி  
கோல மதியினிலே - நின்  
குளிர்ந்த முகம் காணுதடி”

—‘சந்திரமதி’

“ஜய பேரிகை கொட்டடா”

“என் என்றார்க்கு என்என் என்றார் எய்திய தறிந்திலாதார்”

—‘சிரஞ்சீவிக் கதை’



“ உள்ள நிறைவிலோர் கள்ளம் புகுந்திடில்  
உள்ள நிறைவாமோ?”

—‘காந்திமதியின் காதலன்’

“ நாதர் முடி மேலிருக்கும்  
வெண்ணிலாவே -அங்கே  
நானும் வர வேண்டுகின்றேன்  
வெண்ணிலாவே”

—‘எஸ். எஸ். மேனகா’

“ அன்ன முட்டிய தெய்வ மணிக்கையில்  
ஆணை காட்டில் அனலை விழுங்குவோம்”

“ பகைவனுக்கருள்வாய்”

“ அமுதூற்றினை யொத்த இதழ்களும்”

“ காற்றிலேறி அவ் விண்ணையும் சாடுவோம்  
காதற் பெண்கள் கடைக்கண் பணியிலே”

“ மாலைப் பொழுதிலொரு மேடையிசையே  
வானையும் கடலையும் நோக்கியிருந்தேன்”

—‘கபத்திரையின் சகோதரன்’

“ ஆலகால விஷத்தையும் நம்பலாம்  
ஆற்றையும் பெருங் காற்றையும் நம்பலாம்  
சேலை கட்டிய மாதரை நம்பினால்  
தெருவில் நின்று தயங்கித் தவிப்பரே”

—‘சாரதையின் தந்திரம்’

Folk Songs :

“ மாணு மருதையிலே - ஒரு  
மருக்கொழுந்து கூடைக்காரி”

—‘சந்திரமதி’

“ விதியின் எழுத்தைக் கிழித்தாச்சு -முன்னே  
விட்டகுறை வந்து தொட்டாச்சு ”

Grammar :

“ பழையன கழிதலும் புதியன புகுதலுமாகவே இருந்தது”

— ‘ எஜமான விசுவாசம்’

Prose Works :

“ஞானரதம் என்னும் நூலில் கந்தர்வ லோகத்து மதனன் விழாவைப் பற்றிப் படித்திருப்பீர்கள். எங்கள் ஊர் குடியானவத் தெருவிலும் மாசிமாதத்துப் பெளர்ணமியன்று காமன் பண்டிகை கொண்டாடுவார்கள். பாரதியார் வர்ணித்திருக்கும் கந்தர்வ லோக விழாவிலுள்ள சௌந்தரிய அற்புதம் ஒன்றும் இங்கே கிடையாது ‘நுண்வான்’ கொண்டு அமைக்கப்பட்ட பதுமைகள், ‘சைத்திரிக ஜீவன்’ பெற்ற சித்திரங்கள், மாட நிலத்து மண்டபங்கள், சூரிய காந்தக் கல்மேடைகள், அழகே உருவெடுத்த கந்தர்வ யுவர்கள், யுவதிகள், அவர்கள் இணையிணையாக வட்டங்-சுளிட்டுக் கூத்தாடும் காட்சிகள் முதலியவற்றை எங்கள் ஊரில் பார்க்க முடியாது. ஆனால் கந்தருவ லோகத்துக்கும் மண்ணுலகத்திற்கும் பொதுவான அம்சம் ஒன்று மட்டும் உண்டு. அதுதான் பூரண சந்திரனின் மோகன நிலவு. எங்கள் கிராமத்திலே கூட மாசி மாதத்துப் பெளர்ணமியன்று இரவு சௌந்தரிய தேவதை கொலு வீற்றிருப்பாள்.”<sup>1</sup>

“மனிதன் சாக வேண்டுமா?” என்னும் புத்தகத்தில் டாக்டர் வான் டிண்டார்மஸ் என்ன சொல்லியிருக்கிறார்?<sup>2</sup>—

“மறுநாள் மத்தியானம், (ஸ்ரீராஜமய்யர் அவர்களால் இலக்கியப் பிரசித்தி பெற்ற) வம்பர் மகாசபை கணையாழியில் கூடிய போது, ‘கல்கத்தாப் பெண்’ என்னும் விஷயம் பற்றி விவாதம் நடந்தது.”<sup>3</sup>

1. கணையாழியின் கன்வு, பக். 123. 2. மேற்படி பக் 68.

3. மேற்படி பக். 18.

## Proverbs :

“ஸ்திரீ புத்தி பிரளயாந்தகா”<sup>1</sup>

“ வெயிலின் அருமை குளிரில் தெரியும்”<sup>2</sup>

“ விடியா மூஞ்சி எங்கேயோ போனால் எதுவோ  
கிடைக்காது என்பார்களே”<sup>3</sup>

*Figurative Language* : Similes, metaphors, idiomatic usage, and other such figurative speeches abound in Kalki's works. Some of them are *cliche's* or hackneyed phrases. But, though their expression is stale, the contexts are appropriate.

The following list shows a few of the Cliche's used by Kalki at appropriate places to enhance the style.

இந்திர ஜாலம் போல்	- 'விணை பவானி'
கிளி கொஞ்சிற்று	- 'நெ. 888', 'வஸ்தாது வேணு'
சவாரி விட்டுவிட்டான்	- 'புது ஓவர்சீயர்'
பூனைக்குட்டி விசுவாசம் நெருப்புக் குச்சி கோல்மால்	} - 'வஸ்தாதுவேணு'
அவுட்டுச் சிரிப்பு	
பாம்பை மிதித்தவன் போல் இதயத்தை பிளக்கும் படியான விரும்பல் புகையுண்ட சித்திரம்போல்	} - 'இடிந்த கோட்டை'
பாம்பு சீறுவது போல	
	- 'கணையாழியின் கனவு'

Other Cliche's which are also onomatopoeetic words are :

1. சராதையின் தந்திரம், பக். 43.
2. கணையாழியின் கனவு, பக். 191.
3. விணை பவானி, பக் 33

இடி இடி என்று

கொல்லென்று

களுக்கென்று

லபோ லபோ என்று அடித்துக் கொண்டான்.

The comments of Kalki upon his characters and the occasions of the stories, reveal his mastery over Tamil. The idioms, similes and metaphors he uses on such occasions speak for his talent in writing and stand as proofs for his imagination. Historical references, current and ancient; literary references and epic similes are also found in Kalki's language

“அன்றைய தினம் மாஜி திவான், ஜாம்பவந்தனால் புகழப்பட்ட அனுமாருடைய நிலையை அடைந்தார்.”

“பெரியவாய் கண்களென்னைப் பேதமை செய்தனவே” என்று ஆழ்வார் பகவானைப்பற்றிப்பாடியவாறு போல, தன்னைப் பேதமை செய்த அந்தக் கண்களையும் அவற்றைப் படைத்த பெண்ணையும் இனித் தன் வாழ்நாளில் பார்க்கப் போகிறோமென்ற எண்ணமே அவனுக்கு இருக்கவில்லை.”

—‘வைர மோதிரம்’

“அசோக வனத்திலிருந்த சீதையிடம் திரிஜடை தான் கண்ட கனவைக் கூறி வந்தான். சீதை மிகவும் பகிழ்ச்சியுடன் அதைக்கேட்டுக் கொண்டிருந்தாள். கடைசியாகத் திரிஜடை, ....இராவணனுடைய மாளிகையிலிருந்து செந்தாமரையாள் ஆயிரம் முகமுடைய திருவிளக்கைக் கையில் ஏந்திக் கிளம்பி வந்து ஸ்பீஷன் மனையில் புகக் கண்டேன். ஜானகி, இததருணத்தில் நீ என்னை எழுப்பவே கண் விழித்தேன்” என்று கூறி முடித்தாள். அப்போது சீதை அம்மா, மறுபடியும் தூங்கு. இந்தக் கனவின் குறையையும் கண்டுவிட்டு எனக்குச் சொல்லு, என்று வேண்டிக் கொண்டாள். ....ரகு-ராமன் கனவிலிருந்து கண் விழித்ததும் ஏறக்குறையச் சீதையைப் போலவேதான் ஆதங்கப்பட்டான். மறுபடியும் தூங்க மாட்டோமா? அந்தக் கனவின் பாக்கியையும் காண மாட்டோமா?” என்று ஏங்கினான்.”

—‘கணையாழியின் கனவு’

“அப்போது கிழக்கே பூரண சந்திரன், திருமாலின் கையில் சுழலும் சக்கரத்தைப்போல் தகதகவென்று உதயமானான்.”

—‘காதலுக் கள்ளன்’



“அன்று மட்டும் சோமசுந்தரம் பிள்ளை எதிர்ப்பட்டிருந்தால், பீமனுடைய சிலையைத் திருதராஷ்டிரன் கட்டித் தழுவி நொறுக்கியதுபோல் பொடிப் பொடியாகச் செய்திருப்பார்.”

—‘ஒன்பது குழி நிலம்’

“பத்துநாள் குழந்தை பேசுகிறது. அதோடு இல்லை - இவ் வளவு புத்திசாலித்தனமான கேள்வி கேட்கிறது என்றால் - இதென்ன, யுத்த இலாகா அறிக்கைகளைப் போல் தோன்று கிறதே தவிர, நம்பக்கூடியதாயிருக்கிறதா?”

—‘புலிராஜா’

“தஞ்சாவூர் ஜில்லா மிராசுதார் ஒருவரின் மனைவிக்கு உடம்பு அசௌகரியம் என்று அறிந்த சலுகையுள்ள மண்ணைக்காரன், “எஜமான், நம்ம சம்சாரத்துக்கு உடம்பு எப்படி இருக்கிறது? என்று கேட்டானாம். அந்த மாதிரி அல்லவா இருக்கிறது கதை?”

—‘வீடு தேடும் படலம்’

“பல்லில்லாத கிழவன் வாலிபப் பருவத்தில் வெல்லச்சீடை தின்றதை எண்ணிச் சந்தோஷப்படுவதைப் போல அந்தப் பழைய தேர்தல் சம்பவத்தைப் பற்றியாவது எழுதலா- மென்று தீர்மானித்தேன்.”

—‘தீப்பிடித்த குடிசைகள்’

*Pun on words* : In certain places we hear the author punning with words.

In the story *Pudu Overseer*, he has used the term ‘contract’ *udaiyar* to denote Govindaraja *Udaiyar* whose main business was contract. The ‘*udaiyar*’ denotes the name of a caste; it also means, ‘one who has’. Hence, we enjoy the double meaning of the term, both appropriate to the context of the story.

In *Engal Ur Sangeethappotti*, we listen to the following conversation between the narrator of the story and the Secretary of the music club of that locality

The secretary — கேட்டிரா சங்கதியை?

The narrator — போட்டால்தானே கேட்கலாம்.

*Sangathi* means news in the ordinary connotation of the term. The secretary enquires the other person as to whether he has heard a news; to which he replies that only if the news was given he could know. *Sangathi* taken in another way, is a musical term denoting the recitation of the *Swarams*. Hence, the conversation enters into a new line referring to the world of music.

“Did you hear the *Sangathi*?”

“How could I without their being recited?”

Thus, we find the author using the appropriate diction well suited for the context and the characters. His quotations show his wide knowledge in the field of Tamil literature and his application of the lines at proper places, reveal his taste, selection, and talent of placing them in suitable contexts.

*Manipravala Style* : Kalki, as already stated, writes not in *puritanic renaissance Tamil*. He follows the prose style of the well-known national poet *Subramanya Bharathi* and writes a language that is simple and clear, aiming at making the issue fully comprehensible to the reading public. The intention to reach the readers of all levels leads him to use a common and easy - to - follow style, sometimes involving borrowed terminology. Some of the Non - Tamil words and sounds present in his stories: பத்திரம், ஸார், மோல்மீன், ஜோ ஹோர் ஜப்பான், ஸீரபயா, கொச்சின், சைனா, ஸ்வாரஸ்யம், சேதம், சுகம், ரோஸம், நிசி, ஸ்வாமி, மூர்ச்சை, வரதராஜன், தமாஷ், கிராமாந்தரம், பயங்கரம், இஷ்டம், அபாயம், பர்லாங்கு, வேதாந்தி தாம்பூலம் தாரணம், சுந்தோஷம், விஷயம், பிரசுரம், நிஜம், சர்க்கார், பத்திரிக்கை, சமாசாரம், போஸ்டு ஆபீஸ்,

நோட்டுப் புஸ்தகம், பென்ஸில், இங்கிலிஷ்காரன் சேனாதிபதி, ஆகாசம், உபயோகிக்கும், பாம்பர் விமானம், ஆரம்பம், ஆலோசனை அலட்சியம், டைவ் பாம்பிங்....

While borrowing and using the alien tongue, Kalki does not care to "tamilise" them. He simply uses the *Sanskrit Grandham* in the Tamil alphabet to denote foreign sounds. He is so unheeding to the transformational rules in Tamil Grammar, regarding the tamilisation of foreign sounds that he not only pays no attention to *Tharcamam*<sup>1</sup> and *Tharpavam*<sup>2</sup> but also coins words such as 'கொளறுபடி, கேஷன்'<sup>3</sup>

This analysis of Kalki's language proves that he is more concerned with clear expression of thought, precise diction appropriate to the content, and context, humour, and easy understanding of the matter, than upon the existing grammatical conventions and the 'purity' of the language. As a fiction writer, he is rather to be appreciated for his choice and application of diction that beautifully serves his purpose, than condemned as a corruptor of language.

### 5.5 Kalki's humour

The main aspect for consideration in Kalki's style is his humour. His aim being entertainment, his subject concerning the lighter and brighter issues of life, his attitude to life and its problems being humourous - it is no wonder his presentations are highly entertaining - mainly through his humour and partly through other aspects.

Humour is nothing but the power or gift of noting the incongruity in character or situation. A lower level of humour will be that of physical and [linguistic] issues. We could roughly classify the various aspects and modes of presentation of the humour in life and man, into the following

humour + intelligence = wit

humour + desire for reform = satire

humour + desire to wound or pain = sarcasm

humour + double meaning = irony

humour + painful and pointed attack = lampooning

It is also to be noted in this context that humour and pathos are twin sisters, both often going together. However, as already stated, the intention behind Kalki's humour is simply to bring out the incongruity in situation and character, and to laugh at life's worries and troubles. Though his humour reveals the underlying facts about human character, he has not chosen to present "an iceberg" where hideousness and pathos are hidden under the stream of language

Kalki is humorous in every bit of his writing which only shows his general attitude to life; his angle of thought and his way of presenting his views. However, his humour can be studied mainly under three headings.

#### 5.5.1. Humour in situation

That which is fifty percent responsible for the humour in Kalki's stories, is the situations in which he presents his characters.

In *Puli Raja*, the king is intent upon killing one hundred tigers since the astrologers have predicted that he would die at the hands of the hundredth tiger he meets in his life. He exhausts shooting the tigers in the forests within his territory and then goes in search of more tigers in other people's territory.

He even chooses his bride on the condition that she should be the daughter of the king who owns the maximum number of tigers in his forests. The *Diwan*, exhausted in his



efforts to quench the thirst of the king, finally meets a crisis in his life when there are no more tigers anywhere in the nearby states, and the king needs still one more tiger to complete the fatal and decisive number of one hundred. Failing in his search, he finally decides to bring a tiger from the zoo and put an end to this seemingly unending search of tigers.

He brings the tamed tiger in a van and tries to leave it in the forest where the king has gone for hunting. But alas! - the tiger does not co-operate with him. It refuses to get down from the van - so safe and secure - into the 'frightening' forest (its motherland!). Kalki explains this final situation wherein the *Diwan* sweats to bring the tamed tiger outside the van and leave it in the forest to be 'accidentally' discovered by the king.

In *Theeppiditha Kudicaikal* also, we get an equally and even more humorous situation in the narrator's experience of missing a train.

"*Koalippatti Zamindar is an old friend of mine. You need not feel jealous of me. Also, it was not my fault—but that of the railway man—that we became friends. Once both of us happened to be waiting for the train. We were ready with our baggages in our hand. A second class carriage stopped in front of me. He was standing before a third class ladies' compartment. I went in search of a third class compartment and he, a second class. I found my place first.*

"*'Sir, sir, sir. Please open the door,' I cried.*

"*'Sir, sir, sir; please go to the next compartment,' was the polite reply.*

"*I tried to enter into it forcibly. At once a dozen hands seized me. I had to retreat. Before trying two more compartments in this same manner, the train started moving.*

*I ran for a short distance along with the train. After some time I decided that the train could not cope up with me, and stopped. When I turned back I saw Koolippatti Zamindar also standing on the platform. I learnt afterwards that a white man travelling with his wife in a second class compartment 'blessed' him to go to hell : A conversation followed immediately thereafter :*

*'I : What if the train goes to ruin?*

*He : 'What if this company goes to the underworld.'*

*"No objection."*

*Thus we became friends'*

In *Pudu Overseer, Sambandam*, the hero, is astonished, shocked and grieved at seeing the efforts of *Govindaraja Udaiyar* to ruin the lands of his enemy. *Udaiyar*, caught red-handed, tries to pacify the new overseer by offering bribery. Without understanding the integrity and duty-consciousness of *Sambandam*, *Udaiyar* mistakes his refusals for signs of greediness. Hence, he goes on increasing the rate, auctioning the authority of a government official. He is worried over the passing of the precious time and enquires irritatingly whatever *Sambandam* expects from *Udaiyar* in order to seal his lips. *Udaiyar*, not losing his faith in winning the officer's consent to forget his illegal action, and the inexperienced *Sambandam's* astonishment at such open offering of bribery, make us smile, when we listen to the following conversation.

*Udaiyar : Alright, sir ; say what you want ?*

*Sambandam : What I want ! You dare ask me what I want ! Thunder shall fall on your head. This flood shall swallow thine. That's what I want.*

*Rangarajan*, the main character in *Rangadurkkam Raja*, is portrayed as an eccentric character, immersed in his own ideologies and leading a life of seclusion and restlessness. While the author elaborately explains his mental make-up and his past life, he refers to an episode that shocks us first, but afterwards makes us burst into laughter and contemplate over the possible roguishness of adolescence.

The humour could be best appreciated only in Kalki's own words since the words of *Rangarajan's* fellow student that shock and amuse us at the same time, are non-translatable. The expression is typically Tamilian, the humour embedded within the language structure and the people's culture.

Kalki writes :

“மற்ற ஹைஸ்கூல் உபாத்தியாயர்கள், கலாசாலை ஆசிரியர்கள் இவர்களில் யாரிடமும் ரங்கராஜனுக்கு மரியாதையாவது, சிநேகமாவது ஏற்பட்டது கிடையாது. அவர்கள் ஏதோ தண்டத்துக்கு வந்து அழுதுவிட்டுப் போனார்கள். இவன் கடனுக்குக் கேட்டுத் தொலைத்தான். அவனுடைய சகோதர மாணாக்கர்கள் விஷயத்திலும் அப்படித்தான். முதன் முதலில் ஹைஸ்கூலில் வந்து சேர்ந்தபோது, தன் பக்கத்திலிருந்த மாணாக்கனோடு பேச்சுக் கொடுத்தான். அவன்சென்ற வருஷமும் அந்த வகுப்பில் இருந்தவன் என்று அறிந்ததும் “ஏன் அப்படி?” என்று கேட்டான். ‘ஏனா? வாத்தியார்ப் பயல் மார்க்குக் கொடுக்கவில்லை. அவன் தாலியறுக்க,’ என்று பதில் வந்தது.”<sup>1</sup>

Another episode in the same story that changes *Rangarajan's* attitude towards his friend is also explained humorously by Kalki.

*Rangarajan*, after finishing his collegiate education, goes to his friend's village to have a nice time with him. In the evening he calls his friend for the usual walk on the bank of the stream. *Darmalingam*, his friend, enters into his

house saying that he would inform his wife and then go out with *Rangarajan*. At once *Rangarajan*'s eyes open. And, he is all the more dejected when his friend who went in, returns with the one - year - old child in his hands. He realizes that now they belong to entirely different worlds. On the very next day he takes leave of his friend.

5.5.2. *Humour in Characterisation* : In *Kanaiyaliyin kanavu*, a typical village school master is portrayed in a humorous setting and situation. Kalki writes :

“கணையாழியில் பெண்கள் பள்ளிக்கூடம் ஒன்று இருந்தது. அதன் உபாத்தியாயரின் பெயர் கனகசபை வாத்தியார். கொஞ்சம் பழைய காலத்து மனிதர். ஐயோ சாமி; — அன்று அவர் அடைந்த காபராவைப் போல் அதற்குமுன் அவருடைய வாழ்நாளில் என்றும் அடைந்ததில்லை.

“ஸார், ஸார் : யாரோ வரா, ஸார் : ” என்று ஒரு பெண் கூவினாள். உடனே எல்லாப் பெண்களும் ஜன்னலண்டை குவிந்து வேடிக்கை பார்க்கலானார்கள். வாத்தியாரும் அந்தப் பக்கம் நோக்கினார். உடனே பள்ளிக்கூடம், பெஞ்சு, நாற்காலி, மேஜை, மைக்கூடு எல்லாம் அவரைச் சுற்றிச் சுழலத் தொடங்கின. சட்டென்று ‘பிளாக்போர்டு’ துடைக்கும் குட்டையை எடுத்துத் தலைப்பாகையாகச் சுற்றிக் கொண்டார். மேஜை மீதிருந்த தலைப்பாகையை உதறி அங்கவஸ்திரமாகப் போட்டுக் கொண்டார். பிறகு, நாற்காலி முதுகின் மேல் கிடந்த மேல் வேஷ்டியை எடுத்து, அதை என்ன செய்வதென்று தெரியாமல் விழித்தார். இதற்குள் சமீபத்தில் காலடிச்சத்தம் கேட்கவே, அதை மேஜை அறையில் செருகிவிட்டுப் பெண்களைப் பார்த்து ‘சனியன்களே உட்காருங்கள். அவரவர்கள் இடங்களில் உட்காருங்கள்.’ என்று பாம்பு சீறுவது போன்ற குரலில் அதட்டினார்.”<sup>1</sup>

This episode not only makes us laugh at the simple and ignorant school master but also reminds us of a similar character we meet in *Rajam Aiyar's Kamalambal Charitram*. The Tamil pandit *Ammaiyappa Pillai* provides laughter whenever he appears.



Even such noble minded people as *Gopala Iyer* in *Kamalavin Kalyanam* have not escaped from Kalki's sarcastic portrayal of character. While explaining about *Gopala Iyer* he remarks: "since the arrival of *Gandhi* in the Indian political field, *Gopala Iyer* has been seventy five percent congress man....He started learning Hindi twenty years ago. Still, he is trying to master it. He was actively engaged in *Anne Beasant's* Home Rule Movement and hence, was aptly called *Home Rule Gopala Iyer*. But, a few jealous minds used to interpret it as referring to his subordination at home wherein his wife reigns; having in her charge all the reins."

The carelessness of the money-monger *Mohan* which ends in his own destruction in the end, is beautifully and humorously portrayed by the author, in the following lines-

"ஓடாத கைக் கடிகாரம் முதல், தலைவழுக்கைத்தைலம் வரையில் எத்தனையோ சாமான்களுக்கு மோகன் ஏஜென்ஸி எடுத்தான். இவற்றை விளம்பரம் செய்வதற்கு முதலில் கேட்லாக்குகள் அப்புறம் பஞ்சாங்கங்கள், டைரிகள், கேலண்டர்கள்- இப்படியெல்லாம் பிரசுரம் செய்யத் தொடங்கினான். மோகன் பஞ்சாங்கம் வெகு சீக்கிரத்தில் பிரசித்தியாகி, வேறு எந்தப் பஞ்சாங்கத்தையும் விட மோகன் பஞ்சாங்கத்தில்தான் அமாவாசையும், தியாஜ்யமும் அதிசயம், என்ற பெயரைப் பெற்று விட்டது. மோகன் கேலண்டர் என்றால் ஜனங்களிடையே அடிதடி உண்டாவது வழக்கமாயிற்று. அவ்வளவு கிராக்கி! மோகன் டைரியில் மாதத்துக்கு 33 தேதி என்ற புகழும் உண்டாயிற்று...."

It should be pointed out in this context that Kalki's humour is sometimes partly dependent upon the language structure or the culture of the people. For instance, the humour lying in the above quoted lines of Kalki cannot be easily understood by people who are not familiar with the Indian culture that gives importance to such astrological calculations as mentioned in the passage quoted.

Kalki's sarcastic remarks about the actions or moods of the characters add life to his humorous style, on certain occasions. His appreciation that "one among them stood one foot 'far away' from the tiger and shot it down with perfect aim" (*Puli Raja*) is one such.

Kalki's humorous characterisation is not only entertaining but at times is also enlightening since they reveal the general human tendencies.

In *Ejamana Visuvassam* while commenting upon the nature of Mohan's business and the ways and means of earning his living, he calmly remarks: "சாதாரணமாக இம்மாதிரி வியாபாரத்தில், நாலு அணு சாமானுக்கு முன்றரை ரூபாய்க்கு மேல் லாபம் வைப்பதில்லையாதலால், பணம் வந்து குவியத் தொடங்கியது."<sup>1</sup>

In *Srikanthan Punarjehman*, the main character Srikanthan, gets imprisoned for taking part in the movements against the British rule. Kalki explains the situation at his home in the following lines:

"Chaos prevailed at his home for the two days following his imprisonment. There was no end to the worry of his sisters. They lamented, 'Oh, God! Father's pension should not suffer as a consequence of this.' His mother, for her part, cried 'I was insisting upon his marriage but no one listened to me'.<sup>2</sup>

In man's struggle for existence, under whatever pretext he may try to justify his attempts to earn fame and name; his efforts to gain recognition in society; his ways and means of earning his living; his thirst for knowledge; his love for his job; his

1. வீணைபவானி, பக். 69

2. கணையாழியின் கனவு, பக். 91

duty-consciousness - everything. every single movement of his - has as the ultimate inner motive, necessity to thrive - the compulsion to exist - the desire to be comfortable. In rough, undignified, unveiled terms - to provide for his plate and bedding. Every man has an outer roof which he nonchalantly exposes to the world and an inner safety-locker, even the existence of which he dares not be known to others. The fine dressing and the pretty mask however, fail to save his face at the unguarded moments when he reveals himself, through his speech, actions and reactions. The 'affectionate' daughters who pretend to be worried about the imprisonment of their brother, reveal their real cause for anxiety over their father's pension, in their words. The general belief that a man loses part of his courage and inspiration to sacrifice his everything for noble causes, once he is entangled in the chains of wedlock which increases his responsibility and binds him under an oath, is revealed in the mother's cry.

Equally humorous and revealing is another situation that occurs in *Karirulil Oru Minnal*. Sambu and his friend on their way to Sambu's father-in-law's house, get stranded in the highways road when the taxi in which they are travelling needs some repairing. It is already mid-night. To make matters worse, a heavy rain is pouring, accompanied by thunder and lightening. The night being the eve to Deepavali, one can imagine the degree of coldness in the weather. When they were anxiously waiting for the car to move, the driver enquires whether they have brought a torch. On getting a negative reply he is disappointed and gives a valuable advice in a complaining tone, "People like you who start on a night journey should always have a torch in hand, sir ....."<sup>1</sup>

We can see even in our daily life that some people have the habit of conveniently blaming others, and even in-

animate objects for everything that happens. The way is blamed for getting lost; the food is scolded for getting scarce; the fire is chided for one getting burnt; the stone is scowled at for one's falling down, and if no such object comes in handy to put the blame upon, 'fate' is always there to bear the blame. This attitude of mankind is revealed humorously by Kalki in the driver's remark.

Another important factor to be mentioned in connection with Kalki's humour in characterisation, is, his bringing in of puranic, epic, and historical characters into his stories and referring to them mockingly.

His mocking reference to Lord Krishna's musical talent in *Mayilaiikkalai* and his dragging of Veda Vyasar's name in *Veedu Thedum Padalam* are but few examples of the puranic characters who are dragged by the current of Kalki's humour to float ridiculously perched upon his sarcastic language.

The author has also the habit of quoting in his stories, as similes for situations, appropriate anecdotes, either imaginary or acquired by hearsay.

In *Veedu Thedum Padalam*, he speaks of the petted servant who 'affectionately' enquires about the welfare of the *Mirasudar's* wife in the first person inclusive plural. "எஜமான்; நம்ப சம்சாரத்திற்கு உடம்பு எப்படி இருக்கிறது? என்று கேட்டானும்"; and of the Malayala Namboothri who, on seeing too many 'To let' boards hanging in the frontyard of houses in several streets, remarks when he returns to his homeland that 'Lord To let' must be the richest man at Madras, owning almost three fourths of the houses in the city.

In the same story, he mentions about the ghosts that occur in several stories, films and plays, in Tamil as well as in English. Reference is made to *Ratnakumar* (an old Tamil film) ; *Manohara* (an old Tamil play). and Hamlet (*Shakespeare*).



Contemporaries and even the cabinet ministers of his period do not escape the clutches of his humour. The character *Gadothgajara* in *Veedu Thedum Padalam* remarks (in his dream) to the ghosts, 'Oh, ghosts: Do you think that I am not aware of your lying to me? You are cheating the world crying that you died of famine. You say so in order to insinuate the Congress ministers. In fact, you did not die of famine or hunger. You died because your days in the world were over. That was your fate. Who could interfere with it? Run away immediately from this place. Otherwise I shall call the honorable Minister for Food, *Munshi*. Your bones contain phosphorous which is good for lands. He will place an order on seeing you that your bones shall be powdered by machines and used for the lands that are ploughed.'

5.5.3. *Homour in Language*: The ironical references which give just the opposite of the dictionary meaning of the word, is also responsible for humour in Kalki's stories.

When *Mangammal* gets her life's chance to speak against her husband who asks her to start a pretentious quarrel for the benefit of his neighbour's ears, she gets really interested in the job, after some time. Formerly, mere opening of her mouth in contempt would result in *Venu's* beating her. Now, he is obliged to remain silent and his silence stimulates her. After about half an hour, both of them forget that it is a pretention, and enter into the spirit of a real quarrel. *Venu* stands up angrily and enquires, "Is that all, or have you got more to say?" *Mangamma* replies that she has a lot more, and begins once again the *puranam*. But, on realising that *Venu* is serious, she goes inside the room and bolts it from inside. From there, Kalki writes, "அவன் வேணுநாயக்கன், அவனுடைய அப்பன் பாட்டன் இன்னும் இஷ்டமித்திர பந்துஜனங்கள்

எல்லோருடைய குணத்தையங்களையும் வர்ணித்து அவர்களை ஆசீர்வாதம் செய்யலானான்.”<sup>1</sup>

In this story, it is not only the situation but also the ironical language that enhances the humorous style.

In *Srikanthan Puzarjenmam*, while introducing the main character the author remarks, “ஸ்ரீகாந்தன் பெரிய மனுஷன் வீட்டுப்பிள்ளை. அவனைப் பார்த்தவுடனேயே எவருக்கும் அது தெரிந்து போய்விடும். அவனைப் பெரிய மனுஷன் வீட்டுப் பெண் என்பதாக வலவேசமும் சந்தேகிப்பதற்கு இடமிராது.”<sup>2</sup>

In *Onpathu Kuli Nilam* the incongruity in the name of one of the characters arouses a musement especially because of Kalki's mentioning of his age within brackets, “*Chinnappayal* (Sixty five years old).”<sup>3</sup>

Equally amusing is the language of the character *Mohan* in *Ejamana Visuvanam*, who challengingly informs his employees “to be aware of his ability to run the office even with the help of brooms used to sweep the streets.”<sup>4</sup>

The classifications made above were for convenience' sake since in fact character, occasion and language are inseparably united in the completed story and it is only their harmonious blending that is responsible for the outcome of humour. It is only the degree of their presence that decides or justifies the classifications. There are several occasions wherein Kalki's pen has bestowed humour equally upon all the three, so that removal of even a single word is either impossible or would result in, if not complete change of meaning, lessening of the humour in the writing.

1. ஒற்றை ரோஜா, பக் 94

2. கணையாழியின் கனவு, பக். 77

3. சாரதையின் தந்திரம், பக். 152

4. வீணைபவானி, பக். 64

*Rangadurkkam Raja* writes a love letter to the fellow passenger on ship, *Premalatha*. The contents of the letter are given by Kalki in such a style that there is humour in all the three — character, situation and language.

The language of the first part of the letter - the *Raja's* addressing his lady-love—reveals the foolishness that prompted him to use senseless words of love and adoration, not coming from his heart but stolen from books. Kalki himself invites us to enjoy the taste of it.

“என் உடல் பொருள் ஆவியைக் கொள்ளை கொண்ட என் கண்ணில் கருமணி போன்ற, அருமையிற் சிறந்த, பெருமையில் மிகுந்த, தேனைப்போல் இனித்த, மாண்பு போல் விழித்த ..... குமாரபுரம் இளைய ஜயீந்தாரிணி ஸ்ரீமதி பிரேமலதாதேவிக்கு ரங்கதுர்க்கம் ராஜாவாகிய நான் எழுதிக் கொண்டது.”

The rest of the letter humorously reveals the nature of the character and the situation. It proceeds like this :

‘பெண்பாவாய் !

என் இருதயமானது உமக்காக எவ்வாறு துடிதுடித்துக் கொண்டிருக்கிற தென்பதும், இரவிலும் பகலிலும், கன-  
விலும் நனவிலும் நான் எப்படி உம்மையே கண்டு, கேட்டு,  
வருந்தி, மகிழ்ந்து வருகிறேன் என்பதும் நீர் அறிந்ததே.  
என்னுடைய இருதயத்தை உம்மிடம் திறந்து காட்டி  
‘நான் இருப்பதா, இறப்பதா’ என்ற கேள்வியை உம்மிடம்  
கேட்டுப் பதில் தெரிந்து கொள்ள வேண்டும் என்பதற்காக  
நானும் இந்தக் கப்பல் டோவர் துறைமுகத்திலிருந்து  
கிளம்பியது முதல் முயற்சி செய்து வருகிறேன். ஆனால்  
அதற்கு இதுவரையில் தக்க சந்தர்ப்பம் கிடைக்கவில்லை  
.... இரண்டு மூன்று தடவைகளில் உம்மிடம் இந்த  
விஷயத்தைப் பிரஸ்தாபித்திருக்கிறேன் என்பது வாஸ்த-  
வமே. அப்போதெல்லாம் நீர் ‘முடியாது’ என்று சொல்லி  
யிருக்கிறீர். ஆனால் மனப்பூர்வமாக அப்படி நீர்  
சொல்லவில்லையென்பது எனக்குத் தெரியும். ஸ்திரீகள்  
‘முடியாது’ என்று சொன்னால், அது ‘சரி’ என்பதற்கு  
அடையாளம் என்பதை நான் அறியாதவன் அல்ல

மேலும் நான் மனப்பூர்வமாகக் கேட்கவில்லையென்றும், விளையாட்டுக்குக் கேட்கிறேன் என்றும் நீர் நினைத்திருக்கலாம். அவ்வாறு இல்லையென்றும் இந்த மாதிரி விஷயங்களில் விளையாடும் வழக்கம் எனக்கில்லையென்றும் உறுதி கூறுகிறேன்.

“சுருங்கச் சொன்னால், நீர் என்னை மணம்புரிய இசைந்து என்னைப்போல் பாக்கியசாலி உலகில் வேறு யாருமில்லாமல் செய்ய வேண்டுமென்பதற்கு என்னுடைய காரணங்கள் வருமாறு :

1) நான் உம்மைக் காதலிக்கிறேன்.

2) நீர் என்னைக் காதலிக்கிறீர் (இதை நீர் மற்றவர்களிடமிருந்து எவ்வளவுதான் மறைக்க முயன்றாலும் என்னிடமிருந்து மறைக்க முடியாது. மனத்திற்கு மனமே கண்ணாயில்லவா ?)

3) என்னைப்போல் எல்லா வகையிலும் சிறந்த குணம், பணம், உருவம், கல்வி, அந்தஸ்து எல்லாம் பொருந்திய மனான் உமக்குக் கிடைப்பது அரிது.

4) உம்மைப்போல் அழகும், குணமும், கல்வியும் பொருந்தியவர்கள் அநேகா இருக்கலாமாயினும், அவர்களுடைய துர்பாக்கியத்தினால் அப்படிப்பட்டவர்கள் மேல் என் மனம் செல்லவில்லை. அதிருஷ்டம் உமக்கு இருக்கும்போது அவர்கள் மேல் எப்படி என் மனம் செல்லும் ?

5) உமக்காக என்னையும், எனக்காக உம்மையும் கடவுள் படைத்திருக்கிறார் என்பது திண்ணம். இதை நான் மட்டும் சொல்லவில்லை; இந்தக் கப்பலில் யாரைக் கேட்டாலும் சொல்வார்கள். ஆகவே, கடவுளுடைய விருப்பத்தை நாம் நிறைவேற்ற வேண்டுமல்லவா ?

இங்ஙனம்,

நளின பூஷணராவ்

ராஜா ஆப் ரங்கதுர்க்கம்.”<sup>1</sup>



## 5.6. Various types of humour in Kalki's stories

The intention of the speaker, the reaction in the listener, the potentialities of the meaning of the words - all these decide the type of humour present in the author's style.

5.6.1. *Wit* : The following conversation between Rangarajan and Premalatha is an example for the presence of wit in Kalki's style.

*Rangarajan : Is it not an offence to try to leave this world in which a lady like you resides?*

*Premalatha : If that is the real reason, then your jumping into the sea could not be an offence.*

*Rangarajan : How is it ?*

*Premalatha : Was it not because of that you came to know of my existence?*

(Rangarajan blames himself within his mind. 'My boy, you deserve this. Were you not under the impression that you are the sole intelligent soul in the whole world and that all the rest are idiots? Now you stand blinking before a little girl, unable to reply!')

*Premalatha : I think if you have no objection we could sit on these chairs and have a talk.*

*Rangarajan : Whatever objection could I have?*

*Premalatha : Well....of course, everyone sits. But I am not sure whether intelligent persons and those who make this world fit for their living could do so.*

Rangarajan is obliged to laugh aloud. He wonders how this innocent looking girl is capable of such witty talk.''<sup>1</sup>

5.6.2. *Satire* : Satire, fiercer than comedy in its moral intentions, measures human conduct not against a norm but against an ideal. The intention is reformatory. <sup>1</sup> The satirist holds up for his readers to see a distorted image, and the reader is to be shocked into a realisation that the image is his own. Exaggeration of the most extreme kind is central to the shock tactics. The reader must see himself as a monster, in order to learn how far he is from being a saint.

Kalki who has read the works of *Bernard Shaw*, the greatest satirist of the century and calls *Veda Vyasa* as the *Bernard Shaw* of the *Dwabara Yuga*, <sup>2</sup> is himself a satirist. He has not written books of satire with the view to reforming the entire outlook of the existing society. In that sense he could not be compared with *Bernard Shaw* or even with the Tamil poet *Kavimani Desika Vinayakam Pillai* <sup>3</sup> who wrote the satirical comedy *Nancil Natu Marumakkal Vali Manmiyam*. <sup>4</sup> But, his portrayal of characters, his picture of the situation, and his description of the atmosphere are satirical. They denote the aspects that need reformation either in society and politics or in Man himself, and demand correction in an indirect way. The reason behind this difference of the satirical remarks of Kalki in his stories and the satirical works of *Bernard Shaw* and *Kavimani* is that, the intention behind their writing is social reformation and political reorganisation whereas Kalki's main intention is to point out everything humorously. That is evident from the very fact that his satire, in most cases, is not the theme of the story.

For instance he remarks, 'Astonished, the chief of the gang of astrologers, placed his index finger on his nose. If a ten days old child not only talks but also puts such an intelligent question - it rather appears like the report of the

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1. *Arthur Pollard*, p.2. 2. துவாபரயுகம் 3. கவிமணி தேசிக விநாயகம் பிள்ளை 4. நாஞ்சில் நாட்டு மருமக்கள் வழி மான்மியம்

war department and does not ring true. Does it?" The author in these words has criticized the exaggerated reports of the war department.

Similarly, a more biting remark is given by him in *Srikanthan Punarjenmam* —Since Kalki himself was a direct and indirect participant in the freedom struggle of India, he sympathises with the fighters and appreciates them, and passes adverse criticisms over cowardice and selfishness of the non-participants. This is evident in his satirical remark over the the incidents in *Srikanthan's* town.

ஸ்ரீகாந்தன் பிறந்து வளர்ந்து பிங் - பாங் ஆடிய அந்-  
நகரத்தில் அவ்வருஷ ஆரம்பத்தில் சர்க்கார்.... பிரதிநிதிகள்  
தங்கள் கடமையைத் தடிசொண்ட மட்டும் நடத்தி வந்த-  
னர். தொண்டர்களுக்குத் தங்க இடமோ, உண்ண உண-  
வோ கொடுக்கக் கூடாது என்ற உத்தரவைத் தண்டோராப்  
போட்டுப் பகிரங்கப்படுத்தினார்கள்....இப்படிப்பட்ட அதிகார  
அழுலை மீறுவதற்குரிய ஆண்மை அந்த நகரில் ஒரே ஒரு-  
வருக்குத்தான் இருந்ததென்று வெளியாயிற்று. அந்த  
ஒருவரோ பெண்ணாய்ப் பிறந்தவராயிருந்தார்.”

Similarly, in ‘Puli Raja’ when he informs the readers that nothing strange happened in the life of the prince during his early years, he continues to explain it vividly and says, ‘Like all other princes of the various states, he drank the milk of the English cow; was brought up by a English nurse; taught by an English teacher, saw English films.’ We understand from the tone and language, the sarcasm against the lovers of English language and culture.<sup>2</sup>

5.6.7 *Irony*: The definition given in the oxford dictionary is “a contradictory outcome of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things”. Its potentialities are

1. கணையாழியின் கனவு, பக் ,81

2. சாரதையின் தந்திரம், 140

high, since it can also become a mode of escape. To laugh at the terrors of life is in some sense to evade them. To laugh at oneself is to become less vulnerable to the scorn and indifference of others. An ironic attitude is complex and unpredictable; fluctuating with mood and situation, too subtle in its possibilities for any simple definition in terms of moral purpose - a 'test' of truth' to be generally applied. 'However, it sometimes 'ceases to be a functional technique serving a moral purpose and becomes the embodiment of an attitude to life.' Kalki's irony is of the second type - showing his or his characters' attitude to life.

In *Governor Vijayam*, two rich citizens of a village compete with each other in gaining the recognition of the Governor whose journey's schedule includes his passing by their village and stopping there for just a few seconds to receive their welcome. Both, *Chettiar and Iyengar*, try from the very beginning each to avoid the other in getting the attention of the Governor. On the particular day, both go to the railway station. The governor's visit is over in a matter of two minutes and the train moves away. Both return home. The author explains the situation at their homes.

*Chettiar enters into his home. The people at home gather round him and express their eagerness in knowing about what happened at the station. Chettiar has a kind heart. He does not want to disappoint them, Hence, he gives a 'true' account of his 'long' conversation with the Governor in which he appreciated the sovereign's rule over India but specified one defect with reference to their giving honorary titles to the 'loyal subjects' of the throne. Chettiar's relatives are surprised and worried at his audacity in making such a remark straight to a Governor. Chettiar nonchalantly poses a 'I - don't - care-for' attitude and everyone admires him. The story does not end there. The same thing occurs in the*



neighbouring house also. Kalki ends the story with the following words; "If only someone had gone to Iyengar's house at that moment, they could have heard him relating more or less in the same manner his version of his conversation with the Governor who, according to Iyengar, did not even turn in the direction of Chettiar (who also makes similar claims.).

In *Vasthatu Venu*, we hear *Veerasamy* enquiring *Venu* "What is this? Everyone said that it was you who beat your wife. Poor fellow! Was it you who got the beatings? Your whole body appears bloated." The laughter that accompaines the reading of this as well as the above mentioned incident is due to the irony of characterisation and situation. The reader as well as the characters concerned know, what really happened. In both the cases, the prestige of the characters is involved and we laugh at their attempts to save their faces, knowing all the time that the other person is also aware of it and attempts the same.

Irony relates not only to events but also to the temperament and personality of the man who records the events. As far as Kalki's stories are concerned, it is his personality that rules his style. Even in the above illustrations it is not only the characters and situation but also the tone of the author that is responsible for the irony. This sort of ironical tone occurs not only through the characters but also in the aside speeches of the author who occasionally comments over the thoughts and actions of his characters.

While speaking of *Rangarajan's* decision to jump into the sea, Kalki asks the readers whether anyone could guess the reason and then comments, "Let us see what is the reason for his arriving at such an 'intelligent' decision-one that

could act a model to others.”<sup>1</sup> Whoever reading this story could miss the irony in this comment?

Kalki is well known for such comments and he makes a similar observation in *Puli Raja* also. From the beginning the story is related humorously and the motive of the author is established even in the very beginning - in the very opening sentence of the story which introduces the main character.

“நமது கதாநாயகர் பிரதிபந்தபுரம் மகாராஜா அவர்களை, ஹிஸ் ஹைனஸ் ஜமேதார்—ஜெனரல், கிலேதார், மேஜர், கதவியாக்கர் ஸம்ஹாரி, மகா ராஜாதிராஜ விசுவபுவன ஸம்ராட், ஸர் ஜிலானிஜங்ஜங்கபகதூர், எம். ஏ. டி., எ. ஸி. டி. சி., ஸி. ஆர். ஸி. கே. என்றும் சொல்வதுண்டு; ‘புலி-ராஜா’ என்று சுருக்கமாகச் சொல்வதும் உண்டு.”<sup>2</sup>

On proceeding with the story he remarks, that the special feature of his death was that even on the very day of his birth, the astrologers amazingly discovered the fact and also plainly told his father, that he is going to die one day.

Similarly, while describing the surroundings of the deserted mansion in *Paladaintha Pangala*, he writes: “Under the thick shade of trees, there was a big well. There was no device to draw water from it. At the bottom of a tub nearby, a small amount of stagnant water could be seen in utter black colour. There was no doubt about its high antiquity. Hence, one could aptly call it even as sacred as the Ganges.”<sup>3</sup>

Both the remarks of Kalki, quoted here, are typical examples of Kalkian humour. His irony is based upon and aimed at the people's blind belief in astrology (not accepting it as a gift of predicting the future) and the value people place upon the water of the Ganges, ignoring its (scientifically) impurity - carrying everything that is thrown into it from flowers to dead bodies.

1. மயிலைக்காளை, பக். 20 2. சாரதையின் தந்திரம், பக். 137

3. சுணையாழியின் கனவு, பக். 98

### 5.7 Fantasy in Kalki's Humour

On the whole on just three occasions, we find fantasy entering into Kalki's humour which is otherwise quite natural and becoming to his style.

In *Puli Raja* half of the story runs only on the rails of fantastic imagination.

When the astrologers make their remarkable and valuable observation about the child's future—that he will die one day—, a miracle occurs. The author himself accepts it as astonishing. He writes :

*"At that moment a great miracle happened. The ten days old child talked : Only one single word came out of its mouth and it was an address : 'Brahaspathikale'<sup>1</sup> was that word.*

*' All stood wonder-struck, staring at each other.*

*' It was me who talked, Brahmaspathikale.*

*"This time there was no doubt, Definitely it was the child who had thus wonderfully spoken!*

*"The chief astrologer removed his spectacles and closely observed the child.*

*"All men are mortals. What is new in your astrological finding? Atleast it will be reasonable if you could predict the means of death—thus spoke the prince in his small voice.*

*"The chief astrologer replied, 'His highness, the prince, is born under the zodiac of Leo. Enmity exists between Leo and Tiger. Hence, death will occur through a tiger.*

*"You may think that the prince Jang Jang Bahdur would have trembled at hearing the word 'tiger'. No, he*

simply roared once. Then, two terrifying words came out of his mouth :

“Tiger, beware, (of me).”

The author accepts that the incident mentioned above is a rumour. But the way of presentation does not give the impression of its being a rumour. It sounds so real that the casual mentioning of the author of its true nature even passes unnoticed.

Atleast this can be ignored on the grounds that the author has made a passing remark of its being a rumour. In the other two cases, he speaks of the respective fantastic accounts as real happenings, though his tone makes it clear that they are exaggerations.

In *Theeppidittha Kudicaikal*, he portrays the character as jumping a few yards above the ground and coming down lowly only to step on a burning cigar and again go up.

In *Rangadurkkam Raja*, he writes that on hearing the astonishing news the doctor exclaimed, and in that breath-taking moment, the cigar suddenly went inside the throat and was swallowed.<sup>2</sup>

Also, in ‘Puli Raja’ the following conversation between the Diwan and the king, results in fantastic characterisation.

One day Maharaja sent for the Diwan. He arrived. The king reminded him, ‘Diwan Saheb. You do remember that still thirty more tigers remain to be shot dead by this gun. Don’t You?’

1. ஒற்றை ரோஜா, பக். 52. 2. மயிலைக்காளை, பக் 53

3. சாரதையின் தந்திரம் பக். 144—145



*Trembling at the sight of the gun, Diwan replied, 'Maharaja, I am not a tiger,....*

*"Which fool said you are a tiger? You are neither a tiger nor a gun, Diwan Saheb. The reason for my sending for you remains unsaid. I have decided to marry." At once Diwan began to stammer more than ever. "Maharaj, already I have got two wives. Marrying you too ...*

*"Tut tut. What nonsense are you speaking? Why should I marry you? What I want is a tiger. "*

*"Maharaj; Please don't. Think it over first, Your fore fathers married the swords. If you want, better marry your gun. It is enough that this state has got a tiger-king. we don't need a tiger-queen also"*

*On hearing this the Maharaja burst into roaring laughter. "No tiger, no gun. I am simply going to marry a human being. First, prepare a list of the states that abound in tigers in their forests. Then, see to it if there is any eligible bride for me in the state that has got the largest number of tigers."*

This conversation is no doubt very humorous and of course there is always a bit of exaggeration allowed for creative writers in order to convincingly present a dramatization of life. Yet, there is a limit for that allowance and Kalki has definitely surpassed his limits.

The exaggeration has gone to the extent of spoiling the essential illusion of reality in the respective stories. Humour at the cost of plausibility, entertainment at the cost of illusion of reality cannot be accepted or appreciated. It is too big a price to pay for such cheap humour.

### 5.7. Uses of language and style in short fiction

The very first use and purpose of language is expression of ideas and feelings. The expression should be convincing and hence language is partly responsible for the creation of illusion of reality. Kalki excels in this but for a few stray cases, wherein his attempt to be humorous is responsible for the spoiling of illusion of reality.

Since language is a highly potential instrument, a good writer could extricate the best from it. Therefore language in short fiction could suggest more than what it literally means and thereby contribute its share in the implication of theme. Kalki's language lacks this asset, since he tries to be as exact and clear as possible in the expression of his ideas as to the extent of exhausting the contents of his mind through the power of his language. Suggestibility present in Kalki's expression of themes, action and characterisation is mostly the result of his clever plotting and only rarely the product of his language.

However, in the few occurrences of suggestive diction seen in his stories, they excel in their implications and revelations. They point out a deeper understanding of human nature.

Language could help the author to bring about satire and irony in the most implied manner possible. Being known for his humour, Kalki's works abound in humour and sarcasm. His language is of excellent use to him as the perfect medium for expressing humorous thoughts, comments and situations.

Since the theme, the suggested ideas, satire and all such deep levels of meaning in a story are the author's own individualistic interpretation of life, language helps in learning about the author also. That is, through the language and style he uses in his art, we learn about Kalki's personality and understand the tone of the author too.

## Chapter 6

# Techniques

### 6.1. Titling

To speak of the values of titling in short fiction, least of all, it helps to refer to the respective stories while relating or criticising them. Also, it plays a part in creating reader-interest. When the title is attractive—openly referring to an interesting subject which is the plot of the story, or covertly suggesting the theme of the story that is thought-provoking it provides an additional stimulus for the reader to sit and read the story. In fact, next to his general interest to read fiction either to while away the time or to satisfy his thirst to enter into the world of fancy- the reader gets his very first inducement to read a story from its title.

On making a general analysis, we find that most of Kalki's stories are named after the characters — either major or minor; sometimes consisting of the names of the respective characters (*Veenai Bavani*, *Chandramathi*, *Vasthatu Venu*) and sometimes disclosing their relationship with the main character (*Thanthaiyum Makanum*, *En Deivam*). It is interesting to note in this context that Kalki has at times, given im-

portance to the seemingly insignificant character in his stories. He has done this when they have been responsible for development of the plot. For instance in the story *Mayilaiikkalai* the Mayilai is a bull that the hero loses in the forest while letting the cattle graze in the harvested fields. Because of the loss, he is unable to go to the Mahamaham<sup>1</sup> festival and while he comes in search of it, meets the heroine and the story develops thereafter. The main characters give great importance to the bull in their lives, since they believe that by getting lost in the forest, it enabled them to get united in the sacred bond of marriage. But as far as the readers are concerned, apart from such sentimental attachment to the character in question, it helps for the development of the plot by creating a plausible reason for the presence of the hero in the forest on the very same day when the heroine is also present there under different circumstances.

More or less the same case is found, also in the case of the story *Rangadurkkam Raja* where the *Raja Saheb* is but an insignificant character who does not make a single physical appearance in the story. He is simply talked about and referred to by other characters. However, only because he was an exact replica of the hero in appearance, and also happened to fall into the sea exactly at the same moment when the hero fell into it, that the story moves further. Hence, his name gets an importance in the story.

In some other cases, one finds that the titles that are made after the characters, suggest the theme. For instance, in the story *En Deivam*, the title refers to the hero's mother and it suggests the theme of the story: appraisal of the patient, sacrificing motherhood.



Sometimes the names of two characters are brought in the title that refer either to the similarity or to the contrast in their character-traits. (Examples are respectively *Thanthaiyum Makanum* and *Govindanum Veerappanum..*)

Kalki has given a few ironic titles, too. The story in which destruction of life is brought about by nothing but the extreme loyalty of a servant who persisted in saving his master's properties even after his dismissal of office, has been entitled *Ejamana Visuvasam..* The title *Lanjam Vangathavan* refers to the incorruptible death, in the story that speaks of the life of a corrupt person.

Similarly, *Srikanthan Punarjenmam* is a story in which there is a change in the mentality of *Srikanthan* which leads to the shattering of the heroine's dreams built over the hero's unreliable temperament. *Punarjenmam* is a word that is usually associated with changes for the good. In this story it has been used ironically.

In *Vidooshakan Chinnamudali*, one is left in tears to know the end of a person who spent his whole life on the stage in making people laugh. Doesn't the title bring out the irony of a *vidooshakan* tuning into a tragic figure?

Just the opposite is found in *Vasthathu Venu*—a story that speaks of the superiority of intelligence over physical stamina. The title gives importance to the 'loser' in the story. The epithet adds to the humour by giving an emphasis to the well-built physique of *Venu*.

Among his stories entitled after his characters, one particular story - *Chinnathambiyum Thirudarkalam* is allegorical. *Chinnathambi* is the hero and *Thirudarkal* refers to all the vices of man that shape his destiny.

In another of his stories - *Kamalavin Kalyanam* Kalki has inserted double meaning. The title means 1) the marriage of Kamala (or) 2) Kamala's (husband) Kalyanam. The word *Kalyanam* in Tamil, denotes marriage. It is also a proper name. Kalki makes use of this and also mentions it in the end of the story.

A few of Kalki's stories suggest the themes in their respective titles as it could be found in *Saradaiyin Thanthiram*, *Governor Vijayam* etc.

Some other titles make a reference to the plot by speaking about an important incident in the plot—*Veedu Thedum Padalam*, *Engal Ur Sangeethappotti* etc.

Very few of his stories bring the picture of *setting* in their titles as it could be found in *Kinaiyalaiyin Kanavu*, *Idintha Kottai* and *Paladaintha Bangala*.

To conclude we could say that Kalki followed no special mode of titling. He simply gave the most appropriate titles to the respective stories. In one single instance, one finds an absurd title for an absurd story (*Ciranjeevik Kathai*). Most of his stories are named after characters, either major or minor. In them, we find irony, double-meaning, contrast and the relationship between characters. Some other titles refer to the plot by mentioning the important incident in the story or giving a clue to the main suspense in the story. A few of his titles put an emphasis on the theme. Another handful of his titles refer to the settings.

On the whole, his titles are appropriate to the stories in one way or another and nobody could blame Kalki for giving either inappropriate or unprecise titles to his stories. Though the title plays its part in arousing the reader-interest it is so insignificant that unless it is kept up by the beginning of the story, it fades away.

## 6.2. Beginning

The saying that 'First impression is the best impression'; the Tamil proverb that gives the meaning that, that which starts unpromisingly would doubtless end so<sup>1</sup>; and the custom of the pious ones to begin any writing or any function with prayer—if the psychology behind all these sayings and ways of living is understood, it would explain how important 'the beginning' of a short story is to its success.

"The moment of arrival in a story - the reader's arrival—must be carefully chosen,"<sup>2</sup> since "The capricious reader is not only ignorant of all the facts of place, situation, and character necessary for an understanding of the story, but here at the beginning is emotionally cold, critically alert, is not hostile, and mere understanding of facts will be futile unless at the same time his interest is awakened. "Vagueness will irritate him; a mass of details will send him packing"<sup>3</sup>

The effectiveness of beginning depends upon several factors, and one can only analyse the stories individually to find out whether the beginning of a particular story is congenial to it or not, whether it is appealing and effective in creating the proper atmosphere to enter into the story and thereby succeeds in arousing the reader-interest, or not.

Kalki begins his stories in two ways, one is the direct and the other is the indirect way, i.e., in some of his stories he straightaway begins to tell the story, whereas in most others he takes roughly from half-a-page to four to five pages to explain how he happened to know the story or why he wants to tell the story.

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1. முதற்கோணல் முற்றும் கோணல்

2. *The Kenyon Review* No. 126 Issue 4 Vol xxxi, 1969

3. *Kempton* p 224

In the stories that begin directly, we find either one of the following.

a) *Introduction of Characters* : The introduction is made mostly by describing the mental make-up of the character. Though Kalki's stories are not lacking in physical descriptions of characters, he does not venture into an elaborate detailed description of the body - particularly not in the beginnings

*Mayilaikkalai, Pudu Overseer, Onpathu Kuli Nilam, Viasha Manthiram, Tharkolai, Srikanthan Punarjenmam, Police Virunthu, Vaira Mothiram, Govindanum Veerappanum, Vidoo-shakan Chinnamudali, Kailasam Iyer Kabara, etc are examples.*

b) *Description of Settings* : Since description of setting is one of the causes of arousing reader-interest, Kalki begins a few of his stories with them. *Rangadurkkam Raja, S. S. Menaka, Lanjam Vangathavan and Veenai Bavani* are examples. In all these stories Kalki has explained the setting.

3) *Introducing the conflict of the story* : In *Governor Vijayam, Kaithiyin Prarthunai, Kadithamum Kanneerum, Arasur Panchayat, Governor Vandi, Thooku Thandanai, Chinnathambiyum Thirudarkalum* and a few other stories Kalki has straight away entered into the conflict.

4) *Dialogues* : An interesting dialogue that arouses reader-interest and creates immediacy and spontaneity which are the very spices of short fiction is found in the beginning of *Vasthatu Venu, Saradaiyin Thanthiram, Gandhimathiyin Kathalan, Deivanai, Cinimikkuthai and Engal Ur Sangeethappotti.*

Among these *Gandhimathiyin Kathalan* and *Deivanai* consist of dialogue between the narrator of the story, and the listener. The casual speech leads to the narration.



In most of the stories that begin indirectly, Kalki has taken great pains to 'create' an episode that will lead to the justification for writing the stories. In *Orrai Roja* an elaborate explanation is given, to justify the presence of the narrator in the place where the plot begins. In *Idintha-Kottai, En Deivm, Tiruvalunthur Sivakkolunthu, Rangoon Mappillai* and *Veenai Bavni*, Kalki gives an explanation as to how he came to know about the events of the story. In certain other stories we find him mentioning something that is either similar to or contrasting with, the events of the story, i. e., he makes an unnecessary mention of things that are related to the story only in an indirect way. Such a beginning is appropriate more for an essay than for short story. Thus we find him giving an incidence that reminds him of the elections conducted a while ago when he wants to write a story about the 1925 elections, in *Theeppiditha Kudicaikal*.

In *Kamalavin Kalyanam*, he mentions the necessity for lying in order to bring about a marriage alliance, which is not even remotely connected with the story that speaks of the prevention of a marriage. Kalki admits that he mentions the fact only in contrast. Nevertheless, it is an unwanted element in the story.

In No. 888, the beginning contains, two things that are utterly unrelated and unnecessary to the story. First, he gives a few ideas that he says are going to be established in the story. Secondly, he gives an elaborate explanation of how he happened to be in jail where he got an opportunity to listen to the story of a prisoner, when, after all a mere mention of their being imprisoned together, at a jail in the same cell would have sufficed.

In *Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu*, he comments about the dream of *Thirisadai*<sup>1</sup> a character in the epic *Ramayanam* since the

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1. திரிசடை

story is about the dream of the village Kanaiyali-in a figurative sense.

In certain stories - *Subathirayin Sakotharan*, *Bavani B.A., B.L.*, and *Karirulil Oru Minnal* for example - the author has himself entitled the first two pages as 'introduction.'

In the story about the foresaken palacial building, he makes an unnecessary note of an utterly unconnected event of his going to *Pallavaram*,<sup>1</sup> where the mansion is situated.

Thus we find both the extremes in Kalki's beginnings. Some of his stories begin directly with great immediacy and spontaneity, whereas, some others contain unwanted elaborate discussions that spoil the focus of interest.

However, one finds that it is typically Kalkian and he was appealing to the readers of his period only through the same methods that are criticised adversely in this thesis. The group of unsophisticated readers of Kalki asked not for suggestibility and spontaneity which readers of today demand, but were quite satisfied if the story could entertain them- which Kalki's stories definitely did!

The stories, however the author begins them, has to be narrated by some one, and the choice of narrator has to be carefully made in short fiction.

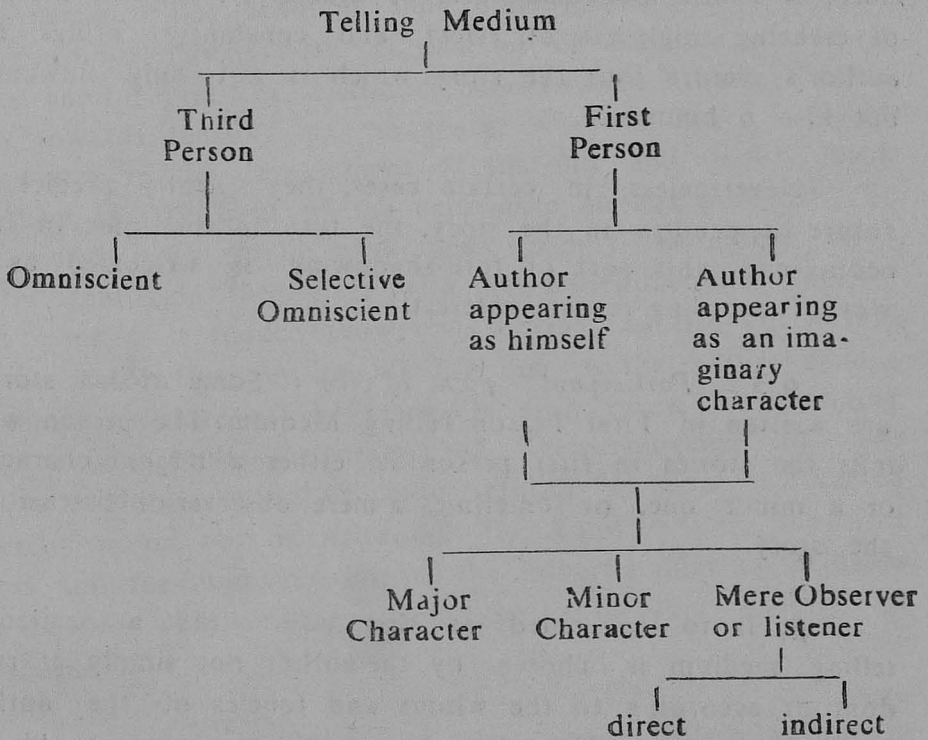
### 6.3. Telling Medium

A narrative has to be narrated. In oral as well as in written form, there is bound to be a narrator. That narrator, to use the technical term, is the 'Telling Medium'. It is the medium through which the story is told. Since any story is told from the narrator's angle of thought, behaviour and reaction, it is also known as point of view. The narrator is the point through which our attention is focussed to get the view of the story. Both the terms - telling medium and point of view - are used by critics.

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1. பல்லாவரம்

The following classification could be made for the sake of analysing Kalki's Telling Media.



**6.3.1 Non-Participant Point of view :** Most of Kalki's stories are written in the third person. In many of them, the author has handled the omniscient point of view, where he is supposed to know everything about everyone. In some, he has been selectively omniscient where he knows only certain things about certain characters and is ignorant of others.

One thing that is strikingly seen in these stories is the author's intrusion. Kalki gets an opportunity to speak his mind. At the very first chance, he begins to elaborately explain about the physique or the mind of his characters, his views about various things, comment upon the characters, situation and mood of the story etc., etc..

It should be admitted that this habit of the author which is but an integral part of his style and individuality, to a certain extent spoils the reader's enjoyment of the story since, it spoils immediacy and spontaneity; stands in the way of creating singleness of effect, and constantly brings the author's picture into the story which is not only unwanted but also a hindrance.

Nevertheless, in certain cases, they subtly predict the future happenings in the story, the turn in the plot or the ending-and, this sort of fore-shadowing is welcomed as a way of arousing reader - interest.

9 3 2 *Participant point of view* : Some of his stories are written in First Person Telling Medium. The person who tells the stories in first person is either a major character or a minor one, or sometimes a mere observer or listener of the story.

It is to be noted at this point that a particular telling medium is chosen by the author not simply at random or according to the whims and fancies of the author but only because that particular medium alone could be congenial to the presentation of that particular story.

We find that Kalki chooses to present the story from the first person point of view only when the story contains incidents that could be better told with the necessary suspense by the selective omniscience of either a major or a minor character. For example, the story *Orrai Raja*, is told in first person by the protagonist. The story proceeds more or less like a detective fiction. If the story has been told in the third person by the omniscient author, suppressing certain facts till the end would become an offence since the author has no right to hide facts from his readers without justification. He may wish, in order to have suspense, to withhold certain facts and disclose them to the readers only



towards the end. But he has no right to do so since there would be no justification for his withholding, whereas, if the same story is told by one of the characters in the first person telling medium, then nobody could blame the character for having been ignorant of certain things. It is quite natural that the character understands those things, only towards the end of the story, when he has followed every step in the development of the plot and looks back at them in the light of the experience he has gathered. To the readers who would have been reading the story, normally identifying themselves with the telling medium, it would not come as a sudden blow or shocking surprise but would be a mere lifting up of the fog due to the natural change in the atmosphere of the story. In such cases, withholding of the facts under the pretext of the ignorance of the telling medium, would be quite natural; the suspense created thereby would not be irritating. The knowing of the full facts and the understanding of the hitherto puzzling incidents in the plot of the story would be a pleasant ending of a journey.

Thus, Kalki's choice of first person telling medium in case where selective omniscience is required to arouse reader-interest, is quite apt.

In this medium, sometimes he makes the narrator appear merely as a listener, i.e., even in the first person telling medium, the story is not told from the participant point of view but, from the non-participant or observer's point of view.

For instance, in *Veenai Bavani*, *En Deivam*, *Natakakkari*, *Rangoon Mappillai*, *Tiruvallunthur Sivakkolunthu* and *Deivani*, the narrator appears as a person who listens to the story told by the major or the minor character.

In certain others, the narrator is a person who observes the incidents of the story — *Engal Ur Sangeethappotti*, *Cinimakkathai* etc are examples.

This subtle distinction may superficially seem to be of no significance. However, when one looks deeply into it one can find out that Kalki writes the story from the listener's point of view only when,

(1) the story happens to be consisting of incidents that happened long ago as we could find in the case of *Veenai Bavani*, *Tiruvalluntur Sirakkolunthu* or *Mayilvili Man*

(2) When the incidents take place in places far away as we could see in *Rangoon Mappillai* or

(3) When the incidents are fantastic accounts, and there arises a necessity for the balancing between romance and realism to create an illusion of reality as in the case of *Idintha Kottai*.

A striking factor that we find in stories related from the listener's point of view is that Kalki always stops in between the narration, to continue his dialogue with the narrator of the story either to put some questions or to comment upon the story. Whereas, in his observer's point of view stories he aptly gives at appropriate places, certain comments that foreshadow the future events. This foreshadowing is quite natural in the first person since any normal person is bound to give such forecasts while narrating something that happened before, and about which he now knows everything.

The tale narrated has to happen somewhere and hence the author has to choose a proper setting for his story.

#### 6.4. Setting and atmosphere

Any story has to take place somewhere at sometime. Hence, the locale and element of time are as essential as characters and action. Characters cannot stand in a vacuum ;

actions do not happen in mid-air. Even in a plane or inside an 'Apollo', still a setting is needed.

Art has two backgrounds - the physical and the psychological backgrounds. The physical one is the setting which helps as a back-screen on the stage. While speaking of the setting in short story one is bound to remember the two of the three essentials for an Akam Poetry in the Sankam Age, namely the *Muthal* <sup>1</sup> and *Karupporul* <sup>2</sup>. Only with the proper background, we get the impact of the emotions clearly.

The most important and necessary aspect to be considered in writing the setting of a story is that it must be appropriate and essential to the plot.

6.4.1 *Locale of Kalki's settings*: Most of Kalki's stories happen in villages. Koli Koovapputhur <sup>3</sup> in Katharak Kallan <sup>4</sup> Poonthottam <sup>5</sup> in Veenai Bavani Mathaguppatti <sup>6</sup> in Thooku Thandanai Koolippatti <sup>7</sup> in Theppiditha Kudicaikal Prathibanthapuram <sup>8</sup> in Puli Raja, Perumal Pudur <sup>9</sup> in Kaithiyin Prarthanai, Chattirappati <sup>10</sup> in Vidooshakan Chinnamudali', Melgudi in <sup>11</sup> No. 888, Kamalapuram in Onpathu Kuli Nilam Arasur <sup>12</sup> in Arasur Panchayat' Poikai Arru-t-thekkam <sup>13</sup> in Governor Vijayam 'etc. are examples.

Some of his settings are, unlike the remote names mentioned above, well-known places. We meet Vasthathu Venu in *Nellikkuppam* <sup>14</sup> the characters of Saradaiyin Thanthiram in *Mylapore Mada Veethi*; <sup>15</sup> Kamalavin Kalyanam takes place

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|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. முதற்பொருள்             | 2. கருப்பொருள்      | 3. கோழிகூவாப்புத்தூர் |
| 4. காதலுக்கள்ளன்           | 5. பூந்தோட்டம்      | 6. மதகுப்பட்டி        |
| 7. கூளிப்பட்டி             | 8. பிரதிபந்தபுரம்   | 9. பெருமாள் புதூர்    |
| 10. சத்திரப்பட்டி          | 11. மேல்குடி        | 12. அரகூர்            |
| 13. பொய்கையாற்றுத் தேக்கம் | 14. நெல்லிக்குப்பம் |                       |
| 15. மயிலாப்பூர் மாடவீதி    |                     |                       |

at *Kulasekarapuram*<sup>1</sup> and the events of Kethariyin Thayar, Police Virunthu, Ejamana Visuvasam and Paladaintha Bangala take place at *Madras* and its surroundings.

Some of the stories happen in a *train compartment*, (Kailasam Iyer Kabara and Orrai Roja): *on board a ship* (Rangadurkkam Raja and S.S. Menaka), and on the way from Rangoon to Madras (Zamindar Makan).

On the whole, we find that his settings vary to a great extent, from an imaginary and unrecognisable village to an exactly pinpointed place as *Mylapore Mada Veethi* and *Aramunaikkaratheru*;<sup>2</sup> from *Bombay Railway Station* to the *Cenji Hills*.

This habit of not sticking to any one particular place greatly helps the author to avoid monotony. He selects a setting 'appropriate' to his story, and the appropriateness results in creating an illusion of reality.

For instance, the innocent and simple characters are quite 'fitting' to the suburban atmosphere, (Krishnan and Poongodi in *Mayilaikkalai*, Amirtham in *Arasur Panchayat* and the sophisticated characters in an urban area (Rajaraman in *Vaira Mothiram*, Malathi in *Malathiyin Thanthai*)

Not only the characters but even the plots prove that Kalki has successfully created the right atmosphere through the selection of a conducive setting. For instance *Cenji Hills* is a right place to get the mood of attentively listening to an ordinarily unbelievable story; the forest adjoining *Rajan Canal* is an excellent place for the plausible development of plot in *Mayilaikkalai*; *Rangoon* serves as a proper setting for the actions of *U P. Ragavacheri* who indulges in tying notes

1. குலசேகரபுரம்

2. அரமனைக்காரத்தெரு



around the necks of bats and calling them jet planes that would dive-bomb and drive away the Japanese. And, who could deny the appropriateness of the selection of Aramanai-kkara street - even now the centre of business and a place coveted-for by business people, as the place of Mohan's office, in *Ejimana Visuvasam* ?

The one place where we find the supernatural element entering into the setting, is in the story *Ithu Enna Sorkkam* which is also appropriate, since the story is about a dialogue between two souls that have already had their departure from the world and have met in heaven.

A properly described, convincing setting increases the credulity of character and action, The reader gets into the spirit of the story, which is very essential for the enjoyment of any type of story. Kalki's description of the Cenji Hills in Idintha Kottai; of the cucumber fields in *Madatthevan Sunai*; of Madurai Railway Station in *Orrai Roja*; of the green fields in *Onpathu Kuli Nilam*; and the Unidentified island in the Pacific ocean in *Mayil Vili Man* are examples. Kalki's knowledge and presentation of even the minutest details, surprises us. When he describes accurately all the way from Rangoon to Tamilnad, mentioning the name of each and every town inbetween, and the condition of the connecting roads we get the impression of really travelling with the hero (*Zamindar Makan*)<sup>1</sup>

Description of setting may at times be a mode of characterisation. The description of the environments can aptly imply the character of the person who has selected to live in it. For instance, a clothes-dumped coatstand, inverted wastepaper basket, unmade beds and other such small details predict a person of untidy habits or of busy engagements. This setting-cum-characterisation type of description serves

many purposes and a multipurpose scheme is always appreciated in any field for its utility, beauty and versatility. By such condensation and compression of action, characters and setting, stories turn more dramatic and effective which is the dream of every short story writer.

In this way, Kalki's settings are wonderful. They bubble with life as a painting does. For a moment they take aback a person in the belief that they are real pictures. They effect the reader's merging with the characters and action—becoming one with the story—his identification with the action of the story—his experiencing of it as a dream without being jolted by realities.

To cite a single and simple example, while describing the dress of *Sarada* and *Lakshmi* in *Saradaiyin Thanthiram* Kalki says that *Sarada* was wearing a 'Kadhi'<sup>1</sup> saree whereas her sister *Lakshmi* was adorned in costly saree and jewels. This reflects their respective social status as well as their attitude to life—*Sarada*, the elder, mature enough and following Gandhian principles; *Lakshmi*, the younger, inexperienced and crazy over worldly possessions and pleasures.

Thus, on analysing Kalki's settings and their descriptions, we find that most of his stories happen in villages—some recognisable and some very remote. Several of his stories happen at Madras where he even refers to the very street and door number. Heaven appears as setting for just one story. His stories happen also in compartments of train and on the deck of a ship. His settings are appropriate to the character, situation and mood of the stories. They are not inventories, nor are they separated from the body and movement of the story since Kalki has cleverly interwoven character and setting description with the plot of the story.

## 6.5 Speech and Dialogue

The functions of speech and dialogue in short fiction are many and important. The principal uses of dialogue in any fiction would be, (1) the advancement of narrative; (2) the demonstration of character and (3) the creation of atmosphere mood. Kalki has handled these essential aspects wonderfully.

6.5.1. *Advancement of Narrative*: Instead of relating all the incidents of the story in author's words, Kalki has employed speech as a vehicle to effect the foreward movement of the story.

In *Madathevan Sunai*,<sup>1</sup> the hero *Madathevan* is angry with *Velammal* for not having noticed his arrival, while she has been talking with a stranger. While she brings his food he refuses it.<sup>1</sup>

"I don't want this food. Take it away. Go and give it to some other dog!"

"Alright. I will stop coming here."

The above quoted conversation is but the end of their long quarrel which has moved the plot a step. A conflict has arisen between them. The man has turned suspicious and the girl has refused to see him anymore. This state of affairs has been effected through their speech instead of a dull explanation in author's words.

In *Saradaiyin Thanthiram*,<sup>2</sup> *Lakshmi* informs her sister that everything has been alright before *Sarada* left them. On hearing that, *Sarada* exclaims, 'Oh, God! So you have been suffering for the past one year!' This conversation reveals

1. மாடத்தேவன் சுனை, பக். 29

2. சாரதையின் தந்திரம், பக். 8

the fact that they have been living together and have parted before one year. We also understand that something has gone wrong with *Lakshmi's* life during this one year.

6.5.2. *Introduction of Characters* : In the same story, while *Lakshmi* speaks of the days of their youth, she mentions about her husband's behaviour during those days. She passes remarks also about her sister and brother-in law. This speech introduces the characters to the readers in an indirect way. Thus Kalki has made use of speech, also to introduce characters.

6.5.3. *Revelation of Characters* : Apart from introducing characters, speech and dialogue in Kalki's stories, also help to reveal their character-traits to the readers. In '*Orrai Roja*' Manohari calls the hero and requests 'Please, can you ask the restaurant man to bring me cup of tea?' After a while she asks, 'Can you do one more help for me? .... But, perhaps, it is time for the train's departure?'"<sup>1</sup> - This speech clearly brings out the politeness of the character who has been portrayed as an educated girl.

In *Deivanai*, *Omakkutti Mudaliyar's* speech seems to be a self-analysis which reveals everything about the character. It is a long speech but not inappropriate since he has got a good listener in *Appukkutti Mudaliyar*. We learn about the hero's taste and likes; we understand his views about life and love; we come to know of his desire in reading; we also gather facts about his past history.

In *Saradaiyin Thanthiram*, the following dialogue between the sisters, reveals their respective characters - the loving elder sister affectionately scolding her younger and taking care of the responsibility of solving the problem; the younger, inex-



perienced and grieving over trifles but true to Tamilian culture, blaming only herself and not her husband for all the troubles. <sup>1</sup>

*Sarada : You fool. Are you still a baby? You are 18. You have got a child of your own. And, you are crying unashamedly! What is the matter. Tell me. If your husband torturing you?*

*Lakshmi : Oh, please don't blame him, I have no talents; no beauty; no good luck. That is all.*

6.5.4. *Interior Monologue or Stream of Consciousness :* Direct and indirect mental discourse - both these methods of expressing thought are useful. In talk, direct discourse is almost always preferable to indirect because of the vividness secured. In quoted thought, the opposite is the case. Direct mental discourse, the interior monologue or stream of consciousness, is fatally easy to write and soon runs into space out of all proportion. Indirect mental discourse, or something closely resembling it, can extend unchallenging and unchallenged throughout the story. Well-done, instead of endangering illusion it would steadily support and enhance it. Kalki has handled with tact, purpose and appropriateness both the types of discourses.

In *Tharkolai*, he writes: *Jagannathan* remained deaf to all the arguments of *Chellammal*. His friends' sarcastic remark that he failed because of his wife's staying with him, did not leave his mind.<sup>2</sup> Here, the remark of his friend is quoted in indirect speech, quite naturally.

1. சாரதையின் தந்திரம், பக்.7

2. சாரதையின் தந்திரம் பக். 177.

If the author is good in fusing quoted speech quite naturally in his style, he is equally good at writing interior monologues.

In *Pudu Overseer*, Kalki writes about the thoughts that were running fast within *Udaiyar's* mind: "Udaiyar thought it over. A devilish idea entered into his mind. 'Do well whatever you do.' Why not kill him and throw his body into the river? He is single. We are two. But, no. It is not good. The *mesthri*<sup>1</sup> who has gone for help may be back at any moment. He and others would back-up the overseer's statement. I don't have any weapon also. Moreover, the river can swallow the spade but not a human body. It would definitely float. Above all, another obstacle has arisen now. *Kesavan* who has been standing here has suddenly absconded. Smelling danger he has run away. Well, only the usual way of offering bribery remains to be tested.'"<sup>2</sup>

In *Rangadurkkam Raja*, *Rangarajan* falls into the sea from the ship's deck. "His head knocked against something. He was travelling down and down into the water. 'Good God! Why is it so difficult to even breathe? This clothing is suffocating me. Let me tear them. *Rangarajan* removed his coat and started tearing his shirt. Next moment he was unconscious.... Rising up and up from the underworld . . . . . Where am I going? My Lord! I can breathe well now. Perhaps I have come to the surface from the deep water. Let me open my eyes and see . . . . . What miracle is this? How did I come here? Who is this young girl? Why does she look at me like this? What an uncaring-for look! What is it, I notice a change in her look! What is she thinking of? Who is the other lady who appears a bit older? This person looks like

a doctor; where am I? This looks like a ship's cabin. But these people were not present in my ship. All are unfamiliar faces. Perhaps I died due to my drowning into the sea and is now in Heaven! Are all these ghosts? Perhaps I am dreaming? Was it a dream - even my jumping into the sea? - No. It sounds real. Let me again close my eyes.' Rangarajan's eyes were again closed after a moment's opening." <sup>1</sup>

These are but very few examples of Kalki's successful and effective handling of interior monologue at the appropriate places and moments.

6.5.5 *Natural opening of Conversation* : Breaking the ice of silence between strangers and opening a conversation, is not an easy job. National and cultural trends are also present to be taken into account. Kalki does it non-chalantly. In 'Orrai Roja' the person's remark about the weather - Oh God what a heat? Extremely thirsty - by the way, did you notice that wonder?' results in a natural opening of conversation.,<sup>2</sup>

6.6.5. *Dialogue appropriate to Character* : Apart from the effect the author wants to produce, the movement in the story, the topic to be discussed and the motive of the speaker, the character of the speaker is also to be considered in order to write natural, convincing speech which would contribute a lot to the plausibility in fiction. Talk should not be dimly and remotely human but natural and lively.

In *Madatthevan Sunai* the following conversation between *Madatthevan* and *Velammal* is a typical lovers' speech<sup>3</sup>. The unduly lowered, respectful tone of request in the woman's words and

1. மயிலைக்காளை, பக். 27

2. ஒற்றை ரோஜா, பக். 18

3. மாடத்தேவன் சுனை, பக். 16

the foolish 'nodding-for-everything-you-say' tone of submission in the man's reply—both seen usually and only before marriage.

*Velammal*: I have come to request a favour .....

*Madatthevan*: Request! why? -order me! I am waiting for it !

In *Srikanthan Punarjennum*, the following conversation-wonderfully reveals the mentality of society, in general, regarding matters of the weaker sex. The humour, the underlying emotions, the hypocrisy, everything that is to be seen in that conversation could be appreciated only in Kalki's own words. In fact the tone of the speaker, the emotional reaction in the hearer, the sarcasm in the author's comments, the effect that the author is capable of producing through the use of adjectives endowed with irony—all these are untranslatable without reducing the real flavour of Kalki's style and minimising the effect.

“ நான் சொல்கிறேன்: கேளுங்கள். இனிமேல் நாமெல்லாம் வளையல் போட்டுக்கொண்டு வீட்டுக்குள்ளேயே இருந்து விட வேண்டியது தான் ” என்று மிகவும் உற்சாகத்தோடு ஒருவர் கூறினார் ”.

“ பாருங்களேன், ஸார்! ஒரு புடவை உடுத்திய ஸ்திரீக்குள்ளை தைரியம் இந்த ஊரிலே வேஷ்டி கட்டிய ஆண்பிள்ளைகளுக்கெல்லாம் இல்லையே? என்ன பிரயோசனம்? ” என்று ஒருவர் வைராக்கியமாய்ப்பேசினார். ”

“ அவள் புடவை உடுத்திக் கொண்டிருந்தாளே, அது ஒன்று பொதும்! நம் வீடுகளிலும் தரித்திரங்கள் பதினெட்டு முழத்தைப் பிரி மாதிரி சுத்துகிறதே! ” என்றார் இன்னும் பரவச நிலையிலிருந்த மற்றொருவர்.

ஸ்ரீகாந்தன் வீட்டுக்குச் சென்றதும் அன்றைய பொதுக் கூட்டத்தைப்பற்றித் தன்தாயாரிடமும் சகோதரிகளிடமும் சொன்னான். (நாலு சகோதரிகளில் இரண்டு பேராவது எப்போதும்



பிறந்த வீட்டில் இருப்பார்கள்) ஒரு பொம்மனாட்டி பேசினான் என்று கேட்டதும் அவர்களும் ஆச்சரியப்பட்டார்கள்.

“ஏண்டாப்பா, அவாள் என்ன ஜாதிப் பேரோ?” என்று கேட்டாள் தாயார்.

“சாஷாத் பிராமணுள்தான, அம்மா ! அதிலும் ஸ்மார்த்தா” என்றான் ஸ்ரீகாந்தன்.

“அதுவும் அப்படியா? ‘வடமானோ, அஷ்டஸஹஸ்ரமோ அஷ்டஸஹஸ்ரத்தில் தான் இப்படித் துணிந்து வருவார்கள்.’

“பாஃ! எவ்வளவு புத்திசாலித்தனமாய்ப் பேசுகிறும். ஜாதிதான் முக்கியமான விஷயமாக்கும். நீங்களும் பொம்மனாட்டியென்று பிறந்தீர்களே” என்று வெறுப்புடன் கூறினான் ஸ்ரீகாந்தன்.

சுற்று நோத்திற்கெல்லாம் ஒரு சகோதரி, ‘அவளுக்கு எத்தனை வயது இருக்கும்’ என்று கேட்டாள்.

வசுந்தராவைப் பற்றி யாருடனாவது ஏதாவது பேசவேண்டும் என்றிருந்தது ஸ்ரீகாந்தனுக்கு. எனவே ‘இருபத்தைந்து வயதுக்குள்ளிருக்கும்’ என்று பதில் சொன்னான்.

“ஆம்படையான் கீம்படையான் ஒருவரும் கிடையாதா?” என்று இன்னொரு சகோதரி கேட்டாள்.

“அதெல்லாம் உங்களுக்கு என்ன கவலை?”

“ஏண்டா? பின்னே கவலையில்லையா? பிராமணனாய்ப் பிறந்தா காலாகாலத்திலே கல்யாணம் செய்து கொள்ளாவிட்டால் நன்னாயிருக்கோ?” என்றாள் தாயார்.

அதற்குள், சகோதரிகளில் ஒருத்தி அம்மாவின் காதில் வந்து ஏதோ சொன்னாள். உடனே அவள், “சிவ! சிவ! காலம் கெட்டுப் போயிற்று. ஏண்டா! அவள் கழுத்தில் தாலி இருக்கோ பார்த்தயோடா? என்றாள். பின்னோடு, “நான் பார்த்தேனாக் கெட்டுடுவேன், அவள் யாராய்த்தானிருக்கட்டுமே? எனக்கென்ன பயம்” என்று தலையை ஆட்டினாள்.

ஸ்ரீகாந்தன், “நீங்கள் நாசமாய்ப் போனயன்! என்று” சொல்லி விட்டு எழுந்திருந்து சென்றான்.

How typically Kalki has brought out feminine gossip and ‘masculine logic’ regarding the problem of women’s liberation?

6.5.7 *Dialogue appropriate to situation* : During a dinner party conducted to celebrate the safe-arrival of the people who have returned from places of and near war-front, naturally the conversation would begin with, and be full of, episodes of war or the conditions of civilians residing there. This human aspect is made use of to start the story ‘*Rangoon Mappillai*’. The dialogue that Kalki has written as the opening scene of the story, is thus quite appropriate to character and situation.

A point that needs special mention about Kalki’s art of writing speech and dialogue in short fiction, is his careful avoidance of writing speech and dialogue in the absence of the narrator. The question of plausibility would definitely arise on such occasions; the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief would be upset. Kalki has cleverly avoided such situations.

6.5.8. *Indiscrepancies* : One of the prime technical requests for the story teller is an ability to make characters talk like living people.

Addressing the bystanders as *Ganavunkale*<sup>1</sup> (*Rangadurkam Raja*) and *Kulandai*<sup>2</sup> (*Subathirayin Sakotharan*) is unusual and dramatic. Perhaps *Rangarajan* spoke in English and the author has meant the word ‘Gentlemen’ which would have been quite natural and appropriate. Nevertheless, the

translation is literal and sounds unreal. Similarly, the natural flow of talk between two sisters (in Saradaiyin Thanthiram) is hindered when the elder remarks: “உன் முகத்தில் மோகம் இருக்கிறது. உன் கண்களில் இன்பம் இருக்கிறது.”<sup>1</sup> People who are used to the language and culture of Tamil would definitely be shocked to read these words - it is surprising to see a lady speaking these words to her sister - however close their relationship may be and whatever situation they may be in. What the author means is, of course, obvious. He has meant to make the elder point out to the younger, that she has beauty and youth - the powerful weapons to hold her husband in reins. No doubt, the crisis in human lives occasionally demand such open talk about delicate subjects; but even then, respectable people use as far as possible dignified terms and turn to vulgar ones only as a last resort. Of course, Man is always at his best when he is watched and no one can predict human conduct when one is alone. The problematic situation which demanded immediate action might have wiped away the usual formalities in language and behaviour. The objection has been raised not as much on the grounds of plausibility of such speech, as on the author's presenting of it in writing to be published. The fall is neither great nor from a great height, but has gathered momentum due to the weight of the author's potential skill and the velocity of the genre's demands.

## 6.6. Suspense and Surprise

Suspense is one of the aspects that could be called purely technical since it has to be carefully and deliberately planned by the author. He makes the reader wonder and continue to wonder throughout the story, what is going to happen and how things are explained or worked out. The author knows exactly how his story will culminate, and he avoids telling the reader everything he knows in an orderly fashion.

Suspense and surprise are studied together since they are complements; suspense preparing for surprise, and surprise relieving suspense that has become intolerable. Suspense which is the reader's emotional reaction to information withheld by the author is one of the major factors of interest in Kalki's stories. The author has cleverly managed to evoke suspense, and in some of his stories it even comprises the story's main design. His plots themselves aid to create suspense since the events are arranged in such a way as to arouse the curiosity of the reader.

As it has been pointed out in the chapter on 'Plot' most of Kalki's writings are complication stories. Hence it is no wonder that his art is full of suspense and surprise—in fact one could easily count the stories that are not centered upon creating suspense and effecting surprise-endings. Even in them, lack of suspense is only due to the obviousness that results out of the author's style.

**6.6.1. Character Surprises :** A handful of Kalki's stories are centered around character surprise. *Srikanthan Punarjennam* where the readers understand the weakness of character only towards the end of the story; and *Pudu Overseer* where an unexpected change in the character of Udaiyar occurs, are examples.

**6.6.2. Complication Surprise :** Kalki has followed a number of ways to effect complication surprise in his stories. He has employed **trick endings** (Engal Ur Sangeethappotti) **unexpected turn of plot** (Kamalavin Kalyanam, Lanjam Vangathavan, Visha Manthiram No. 888 etc). **additional complication** of trap (*Subathirayin Sakotharan, Bavani B.A., B.L.* and *Pudu Overseer*,) and **irony of fate** (*Veenai Bavani Puli Raja Ejamana Visuvasam Governor Vandi* etc.) to effect complication surprise.



Generally, in order to create suspense, authors hide certain facts from the readers. But this withholding of information to create suspense is subject to two provisions. First, it must be legitimate. If the author merely suppresses information which the telling medium would, at that stage of the story, have logically known, or be likely to remark then the author has risked collapse of illusion and everything that it implies. This is what happens in the case of *Kanaiyaliyin Kanaru*. The young men of the village Kanaiyali are eagerly awaiting for the arrival of *Sakunthala* the daughter of their friend and teacher, *Renganathan*. They try their best to attract her attention and please her, during her short stay at the village. One could imagine their disappointment when one day a Bengali is introduced to them as *Sakunthala's* husband. The fact that *Sakunthala* is a married woman and has just come for a short stay at her father's home has not been revealed to the characters or the readers, up to the very end. The suspense and surprise cannot be appreciated since the author has deliberately withheld the evidence without any justification. Even when he formally introduces his daughter to the youngsters of the village, the father does not speak of her husband. Not only that, he deliberately misleads them by putting the question, 'who are the unmarried chaps in your group?' Usually only the father of an unmarried girl puts the question. The meaning cannot be missed since the author writes that he puts this question with a smile. He has also registered the reaction of the youth on hearing this 'significant' question. The author who is noted for his comments and foreshadowings is unusually looking in the other direction while writing this story. Illegitimate withholding of evidence and deliberate misleading of the meaning of words are so unusual to Kalki that in fact his slip seems to be the 'real surprise!'

Secondly, suspense should not encroach upon clarity. Mere confusion or mystification of the reader is not suspense. In order to abide by these rules honest craftsmen employ the technique of foreshadowing.

### 6.7 Fore-shadowing and Flashback

These two are closely allied to suspense. The writer, knowing how he intends to shape the events, with a few words, more often a sentence, rarely in a paragraph, hints at some thing that will occur later in the story and then drops the subject to deal with something else. He has piqued the reader's interest; he has urged the reader to come along with him to find out the answer to the question, or he has placed in the reader's mind the background for a surprising turn of events or a surprise - ending so that the reader will accept them without question.

*Visha Manthiram* is a story that shatters the superstition about untouchability. The post-master, a staunch believer of religious taboos, swears that his power to cure snake-bite ceases to act in the presence of an untouchable - a Harijan. One day during a heated conversation between him and the narrator of the story, another man is also present - an inspector who has newly joined duty in the village police service. The narrator notices a change in the inspector's face when the post-master remarks angrily that he does not want freedom for India, if a society free from the existing taboos would be the consequence. In the end, we learn that the inspector is a Harijan. It is a surprise, but the author has foreshadowed it by remarking about the shadow that crept into the inspector's face.

Similarly, in *Kuthirakkullan* when *Thillai Muthu Thevan* <sup>1</sup> asks the chief of the dacoits, whether he knows the whereabouts of *Karutachala Thevar's* <sup>2</sup> palace, he smiles; when he enters the palace, the silk cloth concealing his face falls down and one of the servants shouts on seeing his face. When we

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1. தில்லை முத்துத் தேவன் 2. கருடாசலத் தேவர்

learn afterwards that he is actually *Karutacala Thevar's* son, naturally we reflect upon the past references. When the story is narrated in first person telling Medium or in the author-omniscient point of view, the narrator already knows the entire story and hence, is justified in making such references. In Selective omniscience, observer's point of view or non-participant point of view, such references could not be made.

It is to be appreciated that Kalki has handled the technique of creating suspense in the story very well on legitimate grounds, without any confusion, with apt foreshadowing that suggests covertly the future incidents but is kept in the background in order to avoid obviousness.

Nevertheless, as usual, there are a few occasions where we find slips. In *Saradaiyin Thanthiram*, the author remarks that as soon as *Sarada* promises to solve her sister's problem she takes a pen and paper to write something. Afterwards there is another reference that the handwriting appears familiar to her sister's husband. These two foreshadowings spoil the suspense of the story which hinges upon the identity of the writer of the anonymous letter.

Such foreshadowings are abundant in Kalki's writings. In a few of his stories, these foreshadowings are made to create an atmosphere. For instance, in *Veenai Bavani* the narrator *Aiyempettai Kandappan* hints at the tragic end of *Bavani's* love affair in six places. Though a complication story, suspense is not, 'the' element in the story. Hence these foreshadowings help only to create an atmosphere - an expectation of a tragic end.

It is also worth-mentioning that appropriate to the conventions and rules of fiction, the forebodings about the future are made on definite lines only.

In contrast to the foreshadowings that predict the future, Kalki has also made use of the technique of 'Flash-back' to explain events of the past in the light of the conflict of the present.

In *Sarathaiyin Thanthiram* Lakshmi speaks of her early life in a casual manner, as though reminded of the joyful days of their youth on this day when she is confiding her sorrows to her sister. This helps to inform the readers more about the characters' lives. In this story, it has still another advantage. The fact that she has lost her mother very early in her life and that she has been brought up by her elder-sister, provides a justification for Lakshmi's crying over her sister's shoulder, when she herself is 19 years old, married and has a child too!

The beauty in Kalki's treatment of this technique lies in his not losing immediacy and spontaneity through it.

### 6.8 Immediacy and Spontaneity

The factors that should be prevalent throughout the story, in order to bring the appropriate effect, are immediacy and spontaneity. Whether chronological or not, the events of the story should be so realistically presented that the reader gets the feeling of having lived with them. He becomes one with the character who is portrayed so vividly as to appear as a living person; he experiences the events that occur to him as if he is living that life. This effect is called immediacy and the resulting spontaneity would go a great way in producing the unity of effect and idea, by creating a permanent impression of the story in the reader's mind.

In Kalki's stories, these two factors are present to a great extent. They are attained mainly by personalising events—making them happen to a person introduced well and individualised, and by giving details as if they are happening



at the moment. Except in the few places where Kalki intrudes as the author and spoils the illusion, in all other places, his writings possess these qualities which make the reader feel that he is one with the story and not reading about it.

Actually, this is simply a round-about manner of insisting upon a chronological order of presentation of the events of the story. In that case, there would be no such element as 'plot' to be analysed at all. Plot is the arrangement of events and it is this arrangement that is responsible for the revelation of theme and character, the creation of suspense and surprise, and the production of unity of idea and effect. Whatever effect the author wants to produce is besought by the rearrangement of the chronological order of the story's events.

It is true that the chronological order itself may suffice, may even be necessary at times, to produce the desired effect-as it is seen in Kalki's stories, *Engal Ur Sangeethappotti Cinimakkathai*, *Linjin vangathavan Mayilaikkalai*, *Saradaiyin Thanthiram*, etc. But in most cases, the desired effect could be produced only by a rearrangement of the events - as it could be seen in *Kidithanum Kanneerum*, *En Deivam*, *Bavani*, *B.A B,L Malataiyin Thanthai* etc.

In such cases, pressed by the need for achievement of clarity and avoidance of confusion, the author relies upon foreshadowing, to create suspense and surprise; flash-back, to present the past in order to understand the present; and transitions, in order to glide unobtrusively into the passage of Time.

### 6.9. Transitions

In a short story, time should not flow. A moment of life must be presented. But the understanding of what happens at the moment depends to a great extent upon what happened before. Naturally, the author compresses everything within a moment to be observed through the key-hole of his writings. To do this, quite transitions are made in order to preserve the unity of time in short fiction.

The necessity to effect transitions occur in Kalki's stories because of the long range of years he takes to be presented in his stories. For instance, the stories of *Veenai Bavani*, *Natakakkari*, *Thiruvallunthur Sivakkolunthu* occur several years back; the incidents in *Mayil Vili Man* and *Idintha Kottai* happen centuries back; the life of the main character's mother covering events that happened twenty or thirty years back is related in *En Deivam*. Thus, the plot itself necessitates effective transitions in Time and the author is capable of handling the situation well.

In *Kethariyin Thayar* <sup>1</sup>the narrator speaks: "Kethari has no remembrance of his father. When he was three years old his father ran away from home leaving his wife and child helpless. We were not aware of all these for long time. Only when the problem of Kethari's marriage arose, did we happen to learn about it through his mother."

A short life-history has been given in the above - quoted narration. Time has passed to and fro from each sentence to the next and still the readers do not feel it. In a casual tone and natural manner of speech, the narrator has told events of the past.

Similarly, in *Veeni Bavani* the narrator swallows three years in a single sentence without spoiling the reader's

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1. கண்ணயாழியின் கனவு, பக் 29.

journey in dream-land-his enjoyment of following the events of the story with a feeling of immediacy.

Thus, in spite of writing stories that consist of events, that take place in the remote past or during a number of years, and at times even at various places, the author has managed through the techniques of foreshadowing, flash-back and effective transitions in Time, to preserve the unity of effect in most of his stories.

#### 6.10. Unity of Effect

Kempton makes a distinction between Unity of Idea and Unity of Effect. Of course we understand that one is the cause and the other is the effect and while a critic is confronted with the problem of explaining, whether and how a short story possesses unity of effect, he has to argue on the basis of unity of idea in that place, Hudson too remarks that singleness of aim and singleness of effect are the two great canons by which we have to try the value of a short story ; <sup>1</sup>

The main reason for Kalki's success in achieving this unity of effect is the presence of unity of idea in his stories.

*Cinimakkathai, Engul Ur Sangeethappotti, Governor Vijayam Police Virunthu, Visha Manthiram, Governor Vandi, Govindanum, Veerappanum and Tharkolai* are very short and to the point. Not a single unnecessary word could be found there. The author has not digressed in any way—not even to make his usual comments upon the characters and their action, or to address the readers.

*Vasthatu Venu, Ejamana Visuvasam, Ithu Enna Sorkkam, Lanjam Vangathavan, Tookku Thandanai, Kanaiyaliyin Kanavu, Kethariyin Thayar, Kadithamum Kanneerum, Saradaiyin Than-*

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1. Hudson, p. 343

*thiram*, *Puli Raja*, *Onpathu Kuli Nilam* and No. 888 — are not as short as the above mentioned and the author has elaborately portrayed either the setting or the characters. However, the portrayals are not out of place but only congenial to the atmosphere of the story.

In *Kethariyin Thayar*, the effect is not only present but is made very strong by the ending. *Kethari*, the main character, is shocked and grieved to see his mother as a widow on returning from foreign, after a short lapse of time. He falls ill and dies. His wife stands before the readers in the same state that shocked and grieved him.

While these stories prove that Kalki does have a talent in writing stories with singleness of effect, there are a few other stories which are lacking in this effect.

*Gandhimathiyin Kathalan*, *Chandramathi*, *Kaithiyin Prarthanai*, *Bavani*, *B.A., B.L.*, *Kamalavin Kalyanam*, *Subathiraiyin Sakotharan*, and *S.S. Menaka* are examples.

6.10.1 *Lack of Idea* : In *Rangoon Mappillai*, the author has no idea at all to be presented. It may rather be called an atmosphere story where even the atmosphere of sympathy and fear - the desired effect - is not prevalent.

6.10.2 *Not giving dominance to the story idea* : In *Theeppidittha Kudicaikal* and *En Deivam*, the idea is present but not dominant due to the author's treatment of the subject.

*En Deivam* - as the title suggests - is an effort to portray the sublimity womanhood, [but more importance is given to the love story of the son than to the pathos in the mother's life. It is true that the author has shrewdly chosen the most convincing way to throw light upon the mother's past.



The foster mother of the hero *Sambamoorthy* is forced to betray the fact that she is not his own mother, under unavoidable circumstances. A crisis arises when *Ranganayaki's* parents accuse her lover's mother and the hero is forced to ask his mother for an explanation. The author thus secures a wonderful opportunity to reveal the mother's past in the most dramatic way. To have simply stated the mother's story in the chronological order would have resulted in a melodrama. To have made the mother relate her story in any other circumstances would have lowered the readers' opinion of her, since then she would have been an egotist, blowing her own trumpet-speaking highly of her sacrifice and self-denial; whereas, a moment that demands an inevitable outburst of her past life—a moment that justifies the revelation of her sacrifice, to her foster-son, serves an excellent motivation to start the narration.

Yet, unnecessary and elaborate portrayal of the love affair of *Sambamoorthy* and *Ranganayaki*, mar the effect. Characters in situations that bear no connection whatsoever with the main idea of the story, would definitely be a hindrance to the emphasis of the main idea. The love story of youngsters - a separate story in itself, as pointed out in the chapter on 'plot' - spoils the unity of effect.

Similarly, *Theepiditha Kudikaikal* - a story written to bring out the ways and means employed by politicians to gain votes - consists of an unnecessary explanation as to why and how the narrator gets access to knowing the incidents.

*Tiruvalunthur Sivakkolunthu* speaks of the life of an artist who realises too late in his life what real beauty is. Several incidents in the story are unnecessary. For instance, the incident which led to the hero's taking an oath that thereafter he would not indulge in drinking, and if he acted against it, let him become blind, is one such. Mere mention of the fact would have sufficed. In fact, if this has been

revealed in flash-back. after the hero's losing his eyes in the car accident following his acting against the oath, the effect would have been dramatic. But the story is told in the chronological order and the forward movement is very lethargic since the telling medium—an old man of great experience relates every incident in detail, adding his comments whenever he feels like that. Of course, the mode of narration is appropriate to that telling medium, who finds an opportunity to open his heart's contents into the eagerly - awaiting ears of the hearer, especially when both of them are in no hurry but only anxious to spend an otherwise sleepless night, leisurely and interestingly. But it has to be accepted that it spoils the unity of effect.

*Chandramathi* gives more importance to the creation to suspense in the story as to who is going to get the heroine. The narrator himself is perplexed at the development of the plot and the suspense is kept up to the very end. So much importance has been given to the heaping up of suspense, that the author has not taken the trouble to individualize the characters and provide proper motivation to their actions.

This habit of not explaining the 'why' of the plot is partly responsible for the lack of unity of effect. An unconvinced reader who starts doubting the plausibility of the situations in the story could not be impressed by it.

Thus, in the above mentioned stories, we find that Kalki's treatment of the subject has resulted in other things getting prominence at the cost of singleness of effect.

6.0.3 *Uncertainty of the author* : In some of his stories, singleness of effect is absent due to the uncertainty of the author. In *Pudu Overseer*, for example, the reader is left to wonder whether the story advocates the impracticability of the dreams of idealistic youth, or favours idealism even

at the cost of material loss. One is not sure of the author's message and this approach spoils the unity of effect.

Another reason for the author's inability to create an unity of effect in his stories, is his jumping from one idea to other - which has been explained in the other chapters also.

Another factor that needs special reference, is the presence of author's intrusion into his stories, that at time spoils the unity of effect and the illusion of reality.

### 6.11. Author's Intrusion

As in poetry so in short story we expect precise words in proper places. The brevity that is symbolic of a short story demands absolute precision and 'concision'. From Allen Poe to Allen Tate, critics have stressed on one point strongly and that is avoidance of any word that would be irrelevant to the unity of effect in a story. The unnecessary expository words are considered the sixth finger in short fiction. The relevance and the arrangement of words should be so concise that, again as in poetry, removal of even one single word would result in the collapsing of the unity of effect. But Kalki has not followed this rule strictly.

Kalki intrudes only in a few of his stories, but, as many times and in as many number of ways as possible.

6.11.1. *Conversing with readers* : "To most of the readers the name of Aiyempettai Kandappan may perhaps be familiar."

—Veenai Bavani-

"Can you guess what the decision was? Never."

"I have mentioned about the love letter that attracted Rangarajan's attention, haven't I? It could be more appropriately called an epic than a letter. Here is a part of it for your enjoyment"

—Rangadurkkam Raja

"My opinion is that his age is responsible for that, Perhaps you may view it differently."

"Only on considering this, I doubt a little upon the talent of Lord Krishna over flute."

"I regret that I am not able to introduce *Perumal Konar* to the readers. The reason is, he is already dead, But don't worry about it. Instead of knowing about him, you can learn about his wife. We do not know what her real name is. All the villagers call her as *Pidari*. That is enough for us."

"I plead that you must sympathise with *Srimathi Pidari Devi*. There is some justice on her side also, it must be noted."

"They came near. Their conversation was not, I sham-- facedly announce, what lovers would speak on such occasions."

—'Mayilaikkalai'

"A good thought, no doubt. But I am ashamed to say such a thing of my hero."

"Conversation was continuing in this trend.

Lunatics! - what an appropriate word? When people turn into lunatics of this kind, there is no difference between such intelligent minds as *Rangarajan* and such dull heads as *Raja Saheb*. "

("Thus our story ends in the very beginning. Hence, 'In the origin is buried the seed of culmination; in the end does lie the seed of the beginning' - this philosophy of creation has been explained in this story. Without my least expecting it, the story has turned thematic, and for that,



I worship the almighty that is the beginning as well as the end of everything).''

''Night 10 O' clock. (The story has begun.)''

''But our youngster alone is standing here all alone. Why? (Oh, Yes. I have forgotten it. In fact, I should not be asking you. You are not relating the story, but I am).''

— '*Rangadurkkam Raja*'

#### 6. 11. 2. *Conversing with Characters*

''(Ohy! *Krishna Konar* : It seems you will utter nonsense in your confusion. How can loss turn into gain, sir?)''

— '*Mayilaikkalai*'

On observing the intrusions of Kalki, we come to the following conclusions.

Addressing the readers directly or having aside speeches with characters is the typical kalkian style. Commenting upon the characters, situation and theme-factors relevant to the plot of the story-appears the main motive behind these intrusions. Occasionally the author digresses to comment in general about politics, society and moral values of mankind. Some times he brackets his comments to show that they are not integral parts of the story; mostly, he does not bracket them. While addressing the readers, he sometimes uses the first person inclusive plural, thereby denoting his close contact with reading mass personally and through his stories. In the stories narrated by a first person telling medium, these intrusions get absorbed in the story as proper foreshadowing of the plot or relevant comments of the narrator which is but quite natural and true to life. Only in the stories related from the author's point of view-in the third person telling medium - do they glaringly protrude as irrelevant

materials since only there an author's presence is to be completely hidden as the story unfolds itself naturally. These intrusions prove that Kalki wrote his stories more in a style of speech than in a style of writing.

## 7. Conclusion

Kalki holds an unique place in the history of Tamil Fiction, not only because of his arrival at the appropriate moment and his unending efforts towards the upliftment of it but also because, more than anybody else, he has been closely followed and boldly criticized by his contemporaries and critics.

*P.S. Ramaiah, C.S. Chellappa, T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliyar, Chidambara Rangunathan, Ku.Pa. Rajagopalan, K.N. Subramanyam, Salai Ilanthiariyan, Kailasapathy, Sivathambi H E. Asher and several others* have analysed his stories and passed their remarks. Their views can be summed up as follows :

1) Kalki appeared at a time when short story was in the developing stage, and contributed more than anybody else to its progress. He wrote mainly for the mass.

2) The captivating humour and the carefree familiar style, were mainly responsible for his success.

3) Though appealing to the reader, Kalki was appalling to the critic interested in aesthetics in Art. His bent for Romanticism and lack of Aesthetism are the targets of attack for the critics who have hitherto analysed his stories.

The first two views are not only accepted but also have been proved after a deep analysis of his works, in this thesis. The validity of the third is questioned not on the grounds of truth, but on the effect of the judgement.

That Kalki favours Romanticism, may be accepted but finding fault with the author for being a romantic cannot be accepted. As Northrop Frye remarks in his essay on of a

Rhetorical Criticism, in his illustrative volume on *Anatomy of Criticism* "The essential difference between novel and romance lies in the conception of characterisation. The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figure which expand into psychological archetypes .... The novelist deals with personality with characters wearing their personal or social masks. He needs the frame-work of a stable society .... The prose romance, then, is an independent form of fiction to be distinguished from the novel and extracted from the miscellaneous heap of prose works now covered by that term ... Pure examples of either form are never found; there is hardly any modern romance that could not be made out to be a novel and vice versa. The forms of prose fiction are mixed, like racial strains in human beings, not separable like the sexes. In fact, the popular demand in fiction is always for a mixed form, a romantic novel just romantic enough for the reader to project his libido on the hero and his animus on the heroine, and just novel enough to keep these projections in a familiar world." (p.314)—This, Kalki's creations definitely do. Hence, Kalki cannot be condemned for writing Romantic works.

The view that Kalki's expression of ideas through the art of fiction lacks the essential aestheticism, can be accepted only to certain extent. As it has been seen in this thesis, an analysis of Kalki's works shows that he has gone astray on a few occasions. A few of his stories are lacking in significance; a few of his plots are fantastic or implausible; A few of his characters sound 'unreal'; A few instances of his intrusions spoil the illusion of reality. A comparatively rare occurrence of lack of unity of effect is also seen in his creation. Yet, these are exceptions and not rules.

This is the answer to the question raised while discussing the scope and aim of the thesis. Kalki succeeded

as a noteworthy short-story writer in the pre-independence days since his draw-backs were few and his merits were many. And, posterity remembers him as a novelist because he was a superb artist in that field.

Apart from this, the following conclusions also have been derived, after attempting a critical analysis of Kalki's short stories.

Kalki's attitude and approach to fiction was unique in the sense that he did not confine the radius of his knowledge-circle to any one single concept but was keen on bringing out the intrinsic human nature with all its brightness and radiating humour in order to entertain people.

His mode of entertaining was also enlightening since since he raised man's hopes by advocating optimism and taught him to endure life by understanding his fellow-men.

He was greatly influenced over the choice of his themes, plots, characters and settings by the then-existing political and social circumstances.

His personal life too had a bearing upon his creative process and as a result we can see the author's personality through his works.

The wide range of his knowledge and interests resulted in his becoming a 'jack-of all trades' and perhaps that is one of the reasons for his not concentrating upon the mastery of short story, as it is evident from his dropping of it in the pursuit of the art of writing novels.

He has not expressed anywhere in his writings, any high ideals or goals. Yet, his stories do have some significance to convey to the readers. Social Reforms, Love, and Human Nature are his favorite themes. His stories are the



matic not because of the author's deliberateness but only because of his innate power over the art, which is proved by the great selection and suggestion seen in his thematic stories, that thereby gain unity of effect. He expresses his themes explicitly through the titles (directly or ironically), in his own words of explanation and through the plots; He has also the talent to imply them through characterisation and plotting. His themes are educative only upto the level of being revelations capable of causing reverberations in the readers' minds.

The subjects of his plots are adventures, character-sketches and fantasies. His plots are based upon 'Man Versus Man' and 'Man Versus Society' conflicts. The former is frequent but lacks the traditional hero-villain implications. His moment of conflicts are adventure, pathos, humour and fall of idealism. He has plotted well, all the three types of stories he has written—Thematic, Character and Complication stories. Though several of his plots centre around complications, yet, they are never pure complication stories, devoid of character-interest. Kalki always infuses character-interest and situation interest. Hence, his plots are not only interesting but also revealing. His habit of interweaving plot and characterisation makes his plotting good, natural, plausible, and convincing.

The complications in his plots arise out of turn in events or through the character-traits of the protagonists. Most of his plots have surprise endings - a few trick endings and others, the natural outcome of plot - following the rules of cause and effect, but produced by the author's talent in withholding facts on legitimate grounds from the reader to be revealed at the opportuned moment. Most of his stories are comedies while a few are tragedies. Play of Fate and weakness of characters are made responsible for the tragic endings. Kalki makes use of chance and accidents for the developments of his plots.

but meagrely and plausibly. Dreams, Illusions, Rumours, Journey through the Past, Life of artists and striking resemblance between characters, are the recurrent elements frequently met in his plots. His 'dreams' are characteristic and realistic; and they also symbolically foreshadow the future events, thus helping to reveal character and create the necessary atmosphere.

Kalki seems to have written a few adaptations and have also acknowledged them. Some of the unacknowledged stories also appear as adaptations to a reader who 'knows' Kalki. But there is no definite evidence to prove it.

Kalki's characters are real and natural; unique enough to be worthy of a protagonist and common enough to sound real. Kalki's knowledge of human psychology as seen in his character delineation, amazes anyone who goes deep into the matter. His wide choice of characters from all walks of life as varied in caste, occupation and social status as possible; his proper naming of them; his introducing of only the necessary characters; his unforgettable portrayal of even the minor characters; his providing proper motivation for their actions; his modes of subtle characterisation - all these are to be praised.

It is surprising that Kalki who later turned into a reputed historical novelist, has not spun many short stories around historical characters, and it is to be regretted that even in the few stories wherein he has attempted to bring in historical figures, he has either made the plot and characters fantastic, or the character of historical eminence insignificant.

Kalki had definite views about the theory of short fiction and he sincerely followed them. The one factor about which he had repeatedly spoken, is the language appropriate for conveyance of ideas. He favoured a non-affected, familiar-

simple style. True to his ideals, he had left out both the academic prose and the slang, and had followed a standard dialect.

In spite of having chosen characters of different levels, he had not brought in dialectal variations in their speech. The only difference to be seen in the language of his characters is between Brahmin and the non-Brahmin dialects.

Regarding his style, he has followed all the three types that are generally differentiated in fiction. However, objective presentation is rare and present only in part of his creation. It could be safely concluded that participance is inseparable from his style.

As far as his language is concerned, he uses, appropriate to fiction, specific diction, to make present the scenes characters and situation; and concrete diction, consisting of word - pictures that bring before our mental eye, the figure and appearance of the objects under discussion. In spite of being an advocate and practitioner of simple style, Kalki has at times used formal diction. He has quoted widely poems, prose works, proverbs and has made use of epic similes, metaphors and "Cliches" to express his ideas. His language, in general, is a *manipravala* style. While borrowing and using "foreign" words and sounds, he does not adhere to the transformational rules of grammar; he simply uses the Sanskrit Grandham to write them in Tamil.

The entertaining feature of his style, is his humour which he brings out in character, situation and language. On certain occasions, the humour is so inseparably united with the language structure and people's culture that it is not translatable. He drags in even the puranic and epic contemporary figures and national leaders, into the current of his humour. Sometimes his humour is cheap

based upon foolishness and fallacy, but mostly it belongs to the higher forms of humour—wit, satire, sarcasm and irony.

His satire is not social satire and his themes are not satirical; his irony is not aimed at man's inward self and his sarcasm does not point out to society's weaknesses. In all cases, the humour—whatever type it may belong to—is merely a reflection of the author's attitude to life—his way of viewing things—which, he teaches to the readers through the power of his pen.

His techniques of plotting are appropriate and conducive to the forward movement of the story; he has written the speech and dialogue of his characters, in a realistic manner, revealing and introducing characters. He makes quick time shifts which go unnoticed without spoiling the illusion of reality and unity of effect.

The main and the only defect in his narrative technique is his intruding in the story. Even that turns into an integral part of his style and is absorbed in the stream of entertainment.

To conclude, as T.S. Eliot remarked about a play by Shakespeare, "For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the character and conflict of character for the more literary, the words and phrasing .... and for the auditors of great understanding and sensitiveness, a meaning which reveals itself gradually." (use of Poetry, p.153) This observation is indeed true of Kalki's stories.

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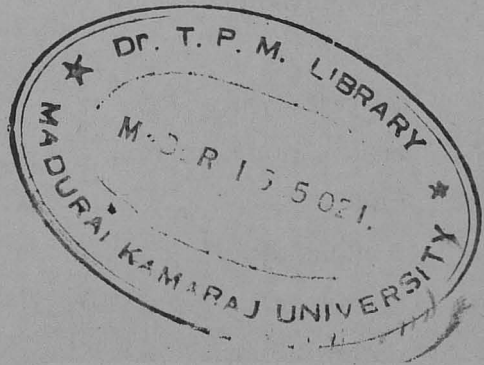
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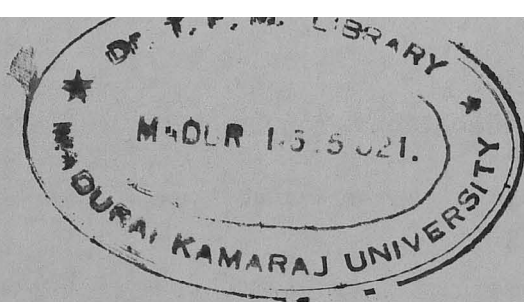
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## Index

abstract painting	— 25
accident	— 51, 56
active heroes	— 72
adaptations	— 1, 62
advocates	— 14
effective theory	— 31
Akalikai	— 36
Akam poetry	— 155
alcoholism	— 86
allusive quotations	— 109
analytical study	— 3
Anandavikatan	— 9, 10, 18
arrack	— 8
artificiality	— 23
artistic representation	— 53
aside	— 17, 104, 136
Asokamithran	— 99
Astrologers	— 128
authoritarians	— 23
background	— 68
Benjamin A.	— 37
Heydrick	
Berg Essentwein	— 37
biography	— 11, 20
borrowed terminology	— 118

brahmin dialect	— 99
Brander Matthews	— 74
Bret Harte	— 102
cabinet ministers	— 129
catastrophe	— 34, 67
central character	— 72
chance	— 51
character delineation	— 8, 81
charles Morgan	— 20
cheap humour	— 14
Chellappa	— 10
Chidambaranathan	— 18
chivalry	— 87
choice of characters	— 83, 18
choice of moment	— 36, 37
choice of narrator	— 150
chronological order	— 47, 48
clarity of expression	— 109
clever plotting	— 14
climax	— 43, 97
coincidence	— 57
colloquial	— 15
comedy	— 34
commentators	— 103
complication interest	— 47
complication story	— 47
construction of plot	— 37

contemporary personalities	— 67
contents	— 3, 53
contradictory	— 6
convincing characterisation	— 84
corruption	— 7
cyclone	— 54
dacoits	— 88
deadlock	— 34
denouement	— 34
deserted mansion	— 138
desired effect	— 52
detached spectator	— 105
development of character	— 74
development of conflict	— 53, 86
devils	— 52
dialectal variations	— 99
dialogue	— 40
diction	— 106
direct mental discourse	— 161
dispassionate recorder	— 105
distractions	— 109
drama	— 11, 42
dramatic conflict	— 34
dramatic recorder	— 45
dramatisation	— 141
dreams	— 52
dynamic characters	— 72
early marriages	— 7



## Index

eccentric characters	— 123
Economics	— 01
effective characterisation	— 97
ego	— 87
eminent writers	— 111
emotional balance	— 72
emotional effects	— 38
emotional reaction	— 64
emotional unity	— 47
emphasis	— 42
engaged participant	— 105
epic characters	— 128
epic heroes	— 83
episodes	— 53, 55, 123
essays	— 11, 20
ethical values	— 23
exaggerations	— 140
explanatory words	— 40
explicitness	— 25
expressive theory	— 31
fairy tales	— 55
factor of emphasis	— 37
falling action	— 34
familiar style	— 15
fantastic	— 54, 55, 92, 139
fantastic characterisation	— 71, 140
fantasy	— 139
fictional style	— 108

folk songs	— 111
foreign domination	— 6
foreshadow	— 54, 152, 154
forward movement	— 107, 159
Frank o' connor	— 65
freedom struggle	— 10
fundamental patterns	— 47
gambling	— 85
Gandhi	— 6, 8
Gauthama	— 36
general pattern	— 8
genteel criticism	— 6
Greek mythology	— 19
ghosts	— 52, 128
hackneyed phrases	—
Hazlitt	— 15
heaven	— 158
Henry James	— 91
hero-villain extremities	— 35
historical characters	— 68
hideousness	— 120
human psychology	— 84
hypocrisy	— 86
idealism	— 6
ideologies	— 123
idiomatic usage	— 115
idioms	— 115
illusion	— 52

Imitative theory	— 20, 13
immediacy	— 82, 106, 152
implications	— 25
impressio	— 140
incongruity	— 44, 119, 120, 130
indirect mental discourse	— 161
Indra Parthasarathy	— 99
inequality	— 7
inert characters	— 97
initial complication	— 43
ironic congruity	— 44
irony	— 21, 120, 138
irrelevant characters	— 87
Iyer v. v. s.	— 40
Janakiraman	— 29
Jane Austen	— 15
Japanese	— 157
jealousy	— 87
Jeyakanthan	— 99
journalist	— 9, 18
judgement	— 3
Kalaimagal	— 10
Kamalambal charitram	— 79
Kandekar	— 63
karmayogi	— 5
karnam	— 16, 17
Kumaran Asan	— 35, 36
labourers	— 14

lampooning	— 120
landlords	— 88
Lanka	— 36
leaders	— 11
limitations	— 60
Lippincott	— 73
literacy	— 7
literature	— 110
local	— 24
magazine literature	— 9
main characters	— 87, 86, 99
manipravala style	— 16
Manikkodi	
Manikkodi period	— 9, 30
man-versus-man conflict	— 35
Mark Twain	— 102
Mateo-Falcone	— 45
meaning	— 25
mental conflict	
methods of characterisation	— 43
Merimee	— 45
mill labourer	— 14
minor characters	— 77, 87, 98
mirasdar	— 14, 16
mistaken identity	— 57
mode of characterisation	— 3
moment of acting	— 87



money-monger	— 125
moment of conflict	— 35
monotony	— 125
moral agent	— 39
Morgan	— 32
motive	— 50, 138
motivation	— 81, 82, 93
Mullaik - Kodiyal	— 13
music	— 9, 19
Naccinarkkiniyar	— 103
Nancy Hale	— 25, 27
narrator	— 27, 153
natural laws	— 23
Navasakthi	— 9
Neela Padmanapan	— 99
non - brahmin dialect	— 99
non - co -operators	— 88
observations	— 19
Observer's point of view	— 154
omniscient point of view	— 151
onomatopoetic	— 15
onset of conflict	— 48, 59
optimistic	— 23, 24
oral anecdote	— 106
O' Henry	— 28
outcome	— 57, 60
pallavi	— 19

Panchali Sapadam	— 27
parallel characters	— 67
Parimelalagar	— 103
particularisation	— 24
passive	— 72, 73
pathos	— 37, 120
patriotism	— 6
pattern story	— 65
peasant	— 14
pedantic style	— 110
perennial theme	— 33
pessimism	— 24
physical attributes	— 77
physical conflict	— 34
poetic truth	— 4
poets	— 7
politicians	— 7, 10
politics	— 9, 10
Pondichery	— 45
porter	— 14
precise diction	— 119
printing machine	— 1
prohibition	— 7, 8, 40
medium	— 1
prose style	— 15, 118
Protagonist	— 40, 46, 95
proverbs	— 111

Psychology	— 84
Psychotherapeutic treatment	— 73
Pun	— 117
puranic	— 128
puzzling	— 97
quotations	— 118
race-goers	— 85
Rajaji	— 42
Rajam Iyer	— 79
Rama	— 35
Ramadurai	— 103
Ramaiya	— 9, 30
Ramayana	— 35
reader interest	— 34, 152
renaissant Tamil	— 14
resemblance	— 56, 57
rickshaw-wala	— 14
rising action	— 34
rivalry	— 87
romanticism	— 6, 46
rumours	— 52, 140
running commentator	— 106
Sankam literature	— 14
Sanskrit	— 16
Sapa Vimochanam	— 36
Sarada Act	— 7, 80
Sarcasm	— 120
Sarcastic	— 80

Satirist—134	— 120, 134
Omniscience	— 27
selection	— 101
selective omniscience	— 151, 153
self immolation	— 93
sensory impressions	— 109
sentimental	— 42
Shah Jehan	— 72
single unit	— 53
Sinthakulam of sita	— 35
Sivagurunathan	— 103
Sivaji	— 27, 68
slang	— 15, 10
soliloquy	— 29
social reformers	— 7, 11, 20
space ship	— 53
sterile	— 20
story patterns	— 38
story within story within story	— 60
striking event	— 47
suburban areas	— 7
sublimating	— 23
subtle	— 25
suggestion	— 25, 28
suggestibility	— 25
suggestive diction	— 142



suggestiveness	— 25
submarine	— 3
suicide	— 85
supernatural	— 157
surprise	— 53
suspension of disbelief	— 61, 96
suspicion	— 94
symbolic	— 53, 54
synthesis	— 3
taboos	— 59
Taj Mahal	— 69
Tamilisation	— 119
techniques	— 3
Themis	— 19
thasildar	— 14, 17
Thomas Hardy	— 20
thinkers	— 43
Thumilan	— 9
title	— 26
today	— 8
Tiruchengodu Gandhi Ashram	— 42, 103
Tolstoy	— 32
tone of the author	— 42
traditional plot	— 35, 44
translations	— 1
tragic effect	— 50
Tragedies	— 24, 49, 50, 51
Tragedy	— 34

transformational rules	— 119
transitions	— 107
trap	— 34,46
Trinities of virtue	— 87
types of diction	— 107
types of Short Story	— 37
typical characters	— 65
twist in the plot	— 63
unity of effect	— 59,107
universal	— 24
universality	— 24
untouchable	— 27
urban	— 7
Uzzel	— 35
Veerasamy	— 28
verses	— 109
village school master	— 124
villain	— 34,35
Vinthan	— 13,14,17,103
vocabularies	— 109
widow-hood	— 7
widow remarriage	— 30
wit	— 120
withholding	— 152

